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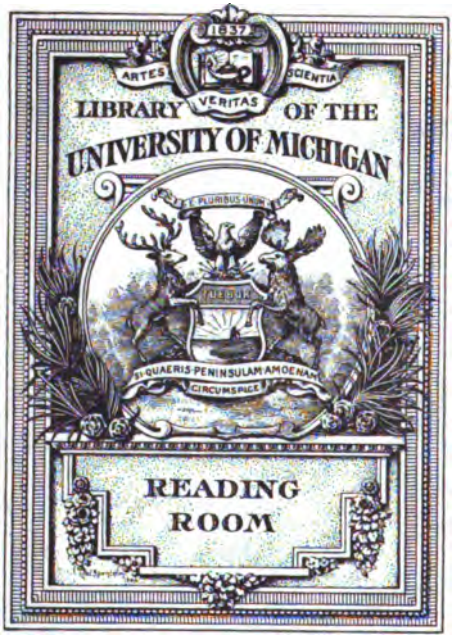
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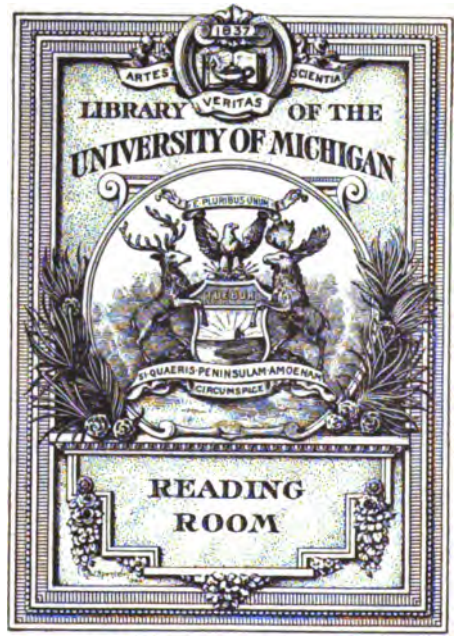
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MRS. JOHN VAN VORST AS "ESTHER KELLY"
Wearing the costume of the pickle factory

MISS MARIE VAN VORST AS "BELL BALLARD"
At work in a shoe factory

The Woman Who Toils

119370

Being the Experiences of Two Gentlewomen as Factory Girls

BY

MRS. JOHN VAN VORST and
MARIE VAN VORST

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK:
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1903

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Published, February, 1903

DEDICATION

To Mark Twain

In loving tribute to his genius, and
to his human sympathy, which in
Pathos and Seriousness, as well as
in Mirth and Humour, have made
him kin with the whole world:—

this book is inscribed by

BESSIE and MARIE VAN VORST.

PREFATORY LETTER FROM THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Written after reading Chapter III. when published serially

WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON, October 18, 1902.

My Dear Mrs. Van Vorst:

I must write you a line to say how much I have appreciated your article, "The Woman Who Toils." But to me there is a most melancholy side to it, when you touch upon what is fundamentally infinitely more important than any other question in this country—that is, the question of race suicide, complete or partial.

An easy, good-natured kindliness, and a desire to be "independent"—that is, to live one's life purely according to one's own desires—are in no sense substitutes for the fundamental virtues, for the practice of the strong, racial qualities without which there can be no strong races—the qualities of courage and resolution in both men and women, of scorn of what is mean, base and selfish, of eager desire to work or fight or suffer as the case may be provided the end to be gained is great enough, and the contemptuous putting aside of mere ease, mere vapid pleasure, mere avoidance of toil and worry. I do not know whether I most pity or most despise the foolish and selfish man or woman who does not understand that the only things really worth having

in life are those the acquirement of which normally means cost and effort. If a man or woman, through no fault of his or hers, goes throughout life denied those highest of all joys which spring only from home life, from the having and bringing up of many healthy children, I feel for them deep and respectful sympathy—the sympathy one extends to the gallant fellow killed at the beginning of a campaign, or the man who toils hard and is brought to ruin by the fault of others. But the man or woman who deliberately avoids marriage, and has a heart so cold as to know no passion and a brain so shallow and selfish as to dislike having children, is in effect a criminal against the race, and should be an object of contemptuous abhorrence by all healthy people.

Of course no one quality makes a good citizen, and no one quality will save a nation. But there are certain great qualities for the lack of which no amount of intellectual brilliancy or of material prosperity or of easiness of life can atone, and which show decadence and corruption in the nation just as much if they are produced by selfishness and coldness and ease-loving laziness among comparatively poor people as if they are produced by vicious or frivolous luxury in the rich. If the men of the nation are not anxious to work in many different ways, with all their might and strength, and ready and able to fight at need, and anxious to be fathers of families, and if the women do not recognize that the greatest thing for any woman is to be a good wife and mother, why, that nation has cause to be alarmed about its future.

There is no physical trouble among us Americans. The trouble with the situation you set forth is one of character, and therefore we can conquer it if we only will.

Very sincerely yours,

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

PREFATORY NOTE

A portion of the material in this book appeared serially under the same title in *Everybody's Magazine*. Nearly a third of the volume has not been published in any form.

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THE WOMAN WHO TOILS

CHAPTER I—INTRODUCTORY

BY

MRS. JOHN VAN VORST

CHAPTER I

Introductory

Any journey into the world, any research in literature, any study of society, demonstrates the existence of two distinct classes designated as the rich and the poor, the fortunate and the unfortunate, the upper and the lower, the educated and the uneducated—and a further variety of opposing epithets. Few of us who belong to the former category have come into more than brief contact with the labourers who, in the factories or elsewhere, gain from day to day a livelihood frequently insufficient for their needs. Yet all of us are troubled by their struggle, all of us recognize the misery of their surroundings, the paucity of their moral and esthetic inspiration, their lack of opportunity for physical development. All of us have a longing, pronounced or latent, to help them, to alleviate their distress, to better their condition in some, in every way.

Now concerning this unknown class whose oppression we deplore we have two sources of information: the financiers who, for their own material advancement, use the labourer as a means, and the philanthropists who consider the poor as objects of charity,

to be treated sentimentally, or as economic cases to be studied theoretically. It is not by economics nor by the distribution of bread alone that we can find a solution for the social problem. More important for the happiness of man is the hope we cherish of eventually bringing about a reign of justice and equality upon earth.

It is evident that, in order to render practical aid to this class, we must live among them, understand their needs, acquaint ourselves with their desires, their hopes, their aspirations, their fears. We must discover and adopt their point of view, put ourselves in their surroundings, assume their burdens, unite with them in their daily effort. In this way alone, and not by forcing upon them a preconceived ideal, can we do them real good, can we help them to find a moral, spiritual, esthetic standard suited to their condition of life. Such an undertaking is impossible for most. Sure of its utility, inspired by its practical importance, I determined to make the sacrifice it entailed and to learn by experience and observation what these could teach. I set out to surmount physical fatigue and revulsion, to place my intellect and sympathy in contact as a medium between the working girl who wants help and the more fortunately situated who wish to help her. In the papers which follow I have endeavoured to give a faithful picture of things as they exist, both in and out of the factory, and to suggest remedies that occurred

to me as practical. My desire is to act as a mouthpiece for the woman labourer. I assumed her mode of existence with the hope that I might put into words her cry for help. It has been my purpose to find out what her capacity is for suffering and for joy as compared with ours; what tastes she has, what ambitions, what the equipment of woman is as compared to that of man: her equipment as determined,

1st. By nature,
2d. By family life,
3d. By social laws;

what her strength is and what her weaknesses are as compared with the woman of leisure; and finally, to discern the tendencies of a new society as manifested by its working girls.

After many weeks spent among them as one of them I have come away convinced that no earnest effort for their betterment is fruitless. I am hopeful that my faithful descriptions will perhaps suggest, to the hearts of those who read, some ways of rendering personal and general help to that class who, through the sordidness and squalour of their material surroundings, the limitation of their opportunities, are condemned to slow death—mental, moral, physical death! If into their prison's midst, after the reading of these lines, a single death pardon should be carried, my work shall not have been in vain.

IN A PITTSBURG FACTORY

CHAPTER II

In a Pittsburg Factory

In choosing the scene for my first experiences, I decided upon Pittsburg, as being an industrial centre whose character was determined by its working population. It exceeds all other cities of the country in the variety and extent of its manufacturing products. Of its 321,616 inhabitants, 100,000 are labouring men employed in the mills. Add to these the great number of women and girls who work in the factories and clothing shops, and the character of the place becomes apparent at a glance. There is, moreover, another reason which guided me toward this Middle West town without its like. This land which we are accustomed to call democratic, is in reality composed of a multitude of kingdoms whose despots are the employers—the multi-millionaire patrons—and whose serfs are the labouring men and women. The rulers are invested with an authority and a power not unlike those possessed by the early barons, the feudal lords, the Lorenzo de Medicis, the Cheops; but with this difference, that whereas Pharaoh by his unique will controlled a thousand slaves, the steel magnate uses, for his own ends also, thousands of

separate wills. It was a submissive throng who built the pyramids. The mills which produce half the steel the world requires are run by a collection of individuals. Civilization has undergone a change. The multitudes once worked for one; now each man works for himself first and for a master secondarily. In our new society where tradition plays no part, where the useful is paramount, where business asserts itself over art and beauty, where material needs are the first to be satisfied, and where the country's unclaimed riches are our chief incentive to effort, it is not uninteresting to find an analogy with the society in Italy which produced the Renaissance. Diametrically opposed in their ideals, they have a common spirit. In Italy the rebirth was of the love of art, and of classic forms, the desire to embellish—all that was inspired by culture of the beautiful; the Renaissance in America is the rebirth of man's originality in the invention of the useful, the virgin power of man's wits as quickened in the crude struggle for life. Florence is *par excellence* the place where we can study the Italian Renaissance; Pittsburg appealed to me as a most favourable spot to watch the American Renaissance, the enlivening of energies which give value to a man devoid of education, energies which in their daily exercise with experience generate a new force, a force that makes our country what it is, industrially and economically.

So it was toward Pittsburg that I first directed my

steps, but before leaving New York I assumed my disguise. In the Parisian clothes I am accustomed to wear I present the familiar outline of any woman of the world. With the aid of coarse woolen garments, a shabby felt sailor hat, a cheap piece of fur, a knitted shawl and gloves I am transformed into a working girl of the ordinary type. I was born and bred and brought up in the world of the fortunate—I am going over now into the world of the unfortunate. I am to share their burdens, to lead their lives, to be present as one of them at the spectacle of their sufferings and joys, their ambitions and sorrows.

I get no farther than the depot when I observe that I am being treated as though I were ignorant and lacking in experience. As a rule the gateman says a respectful "To the right" or "To the left," and trusts to his well-dressed hearer's intelligence. A word is all that a moment's hesitation calls forth. To the working girl he explains as follows: "Now you take your ticket, do you understand, and I'll pick up your money for you; you don't need to pay anything for your ferry—just put those three cents back in your pocket-book and go down there to where that gentleman is standing and he'll direct you to your train."

This without my having asked a question. I had divested myself of a certain authority along with my good clothes, and I had become one of a class which,

as the gateman had found out, and as I find out later myself, are devoid of all knowledge of the world and, aside from their manual training, ignorant on all subjects.

My train is three hours late, which brings me at about noon to Pittsburg. I have not a friend or an acquaintance within hundreds of miles. With my bag in my hand I make my way through the dark, busy streets to the Young Women's Christian Association. It is down near a frozen river. The wind blows sharp and biting over the icy water; the streets are covered with snow, and over the snow the soot falls softly like a mantle of perpetual mourning. There is almost no traffic. Innumerable tramways ring their way up and down wire-lined avenues; occasionally a train of freight cars announces itself with a warning bell in the city's midst. It is a black town of toil, one man in every three a labourer. They have no need for vehicles of pleasure. The trolleys take them to their work, the trains transport the products of the mills.

I hear all languages spoken: this prodigious town is a Western bazaar where the nations assemble not to buy but to be employed. The stagnant scum of other countries floats hither to be purified in the fierce bouillon of live opportunity. It is a cosmopolitan procession that passes me: the dusky Easterner with a fez of Astrakhan, the gentle-eyed Italian with a shawl of gay colours, the loose-lipped

"THE STREETS ARE COVERED WITH SNOW, AND OVER THE SNOW THE SOOT FALLS SOFTLY LIKE A MANTLE OF PERPETUAL MOURNING"

Hungarian, the pale, mystic Swede, the German with wife and children hanging on his arm.

In this giant bureau of labour all nationalities gather, united by a common bond of hope, animated by a common chance of prosperity, kindred through a common effort, fellow-citizens in a new land of freedom.

At the central office of the Young Women's Christian Association I receive what attention a busy secretary can spare me. She questions and I answer as best I can.

"What is it you want?"

"Board and work in a factory."

"Have you ever worked in a factory?"

"No, ma'am."

"Have you ever done any housework?"

She talks in the low, confidential tone of those accustomed to reforming prisoners and reasoning with the poor.

"Yes, ma'am, I have done housework."

"What did you make?"

"Twelve dollars a month."

"I can get you a place where you will have a room to yourself and fourteen dollars a month. Do you want it?"

"No, ma'am."

"Are you making anything now?"

"No, ma'am."

"Can you afford to pay board?"

"Yes, as I hope to get work at once."

She directs me to a boarding place which is at the same time a refuge for the friendless and a shelter for waifs. The newly arrived population of the fast-growing city seems unfamiliar with the address I carry written on a card. I wait on cold street corners, I travel over miles of half-settled country, long stretches of shanties and saloons huddled close to the trolley line. The thermometer is at zero. Toward three o'clock I find the waif boarding-house.

The matron is in the parlour hovering over a gas stove. She has false hair, false teeth, false jewelry, and the dry, crabbed, inquisitive manner of the idle who are entrusted with authority. She is there to direct others and do nothing herself, to be cross and make herself dreaded. In the distance I can hear a shrill, nasal orchestra of children's voices. I am cold and hungry. I have as yet no job. The noise, the sordidness, the witchlike matron annoy me. I have a sudden impulse to flee, to seek warmth and food and proper shelter—to snap my fingers at experience and be grateful I was born among the fortunate. Something within me calls *Courage!* I take a room at three dollars a week with board, put my things in it, and while my feet yet ache with cold I start to find a factory, a pickle factory, which, the matron tells me, is run by a Christian gentleman.

I have felt timid and even overbold at different moments in my life, but never so audacious as on entering a factory door marked in gilt letters: "*Women Employees.*"

The Cerberus between me and the fulfilment of my purpose is a gray-haired timekeeper with kindly eyes. He sits in a glass cage and about him are a score or more of clocks all ticking soundly and all surrounded by an extra dial of small numbers running from one to a thousand. Each number means a workman—each tick of the clock a moment of his life gone in the service of the pickle company. I rap on the window of the glass cage. It opens.

"Do you need any girls?" I ask, trying not to show my emotion.

"Ever worked in a factory?"

"No, sir; but I'm very handy."

"What have you done?"

"Housework," I respond with conviction, beginning to believe it myself.

"Well," he says, looking at me, "they need help up in the bottling department; but I don't know as it would pay you—they don't give more than sixty or seventy cents a day."

"I am awfully anxious for work," I say. "Couldn't I begin and get raised, perhaps?"

"Surely—there is always room for those who show the right spirit. You come in to-morrow morning at a quarter before seven. You can try it,

and you mustn't get discouraged; there's plenty of work for good workers."

The blood tingles through my cold hands. My heart is lighter. I have not come in vain. I have a place!

When I get back to the boarding-house it is twilight. The voices I had heard and been annoyed by have materialized. Before the gas stove there are nine small individuals dressed in a strange combination of uniform checked aprons and patent leather boots worn out and discarded by the babies of the fortunate. The small feet they encase are crossed, and the freshly washed faces are demure, as the matron with the wig frowns down into a newspaper from which she now and then hisses a command to order. Three miniature members are rocking violently in tiny rocking chairs.

"*Quit rocking!*" the false mother cries at them. "You make my head ache. Most of 'em have no parents," she explains to me. "None of 'em have homes."

Here they are, a small kingdom, not wanted, unwelcome, unprovided for, growled at and grumbled over. Yet each is developing in spite of chance; each is determining hour by hour his heritage from unknown parents. The matron leaves us; the rocking begins again. Conversation is animated. The three-year-old baby bears the name of a three-year-old hero. This "Dewey" complains in a plain-

tive voice of a too long absent mother. His rosy lips are pursed out even with his nose. Again and again he reiterates the refrain: "My mamma don't never come to see me. She don't bring me no toys." And then with pride, "My mamma buys rice and tea and lots of things," and dashing to the window as a trolley rattles by, "My mamma comes in the street cars, only," sadly, "she don't never come."

Not one of them has forgotten what fate has willed them to do without. At first they look shrinkingly toward my outstretched hand. Is it coming to administer some punishment? Little by little they are reassured, and, gaining in confidence, they sketch for me in disconnected chapters the short outlines of their lives.

"I've been to the hospital," says one, "and so's Lily. I drank a lot of washing soda and it made me sick."

Lily begins her hospital reminiscences. "I had typhoy fever—I was in the childun's ward awful long, and one night they turned down the lights—it was just evening—and a man came in and he took one of the babies up in his arms, and we all said, 'What's the row? What's the row?' and he says 'Hush, the baby's dead.' And out in the hall there was something white, and he carried the baby and put it in the white thing, and the baby had a doll that could talk, and he put that in the white thing too, right alongside o' the dead baby. Another

time," Lily goes on, "there was a baby in a crib alongside of mine, and one day he was takin' his bottle, and all of a suddint he choked, and he kept on chokin' and then he died, and he was still takin' his bottle."

Lily is five. I see in her and in her companions a familiarity not only with the mysteries but with the stern realities of life. They have an understanding look at the mention of death, drunkenness and all domestic difficulties or irregularities. Their vocabulary and conversation image the violent and brutal side of existence—the only one with which they are acquainted.

At bedtime I find my way upward through dark and narrow stairs that open into a long room with a slanting roof. It serves as nursery and parlour. In the dull light of a stove and an oil lamp four or five women are seated with babies on their knees. They have the meek look of those who doom themselves to acceptance of misfortune, the flat, resigned figures of the overworked. Their loose woolen jackets hang over their gaunt shoulders; their straight hair is brushed hard and smooth against high foreheads. One baby lies a comfortable bundle in its mother's arms; one is black in the face after a spasm of coughing; one howls its woes through a scarlet mask. The corners of the room are filled with the drones—those who "work for a bite of grub." The cook, her washing done, has piled her aching bones in a heap;

her drawn face waits like an indicator for some fresh signal to a new fatigue. Mary, the woman-of-all-work, who has spent more than one night within a prison's walls, has long ago been brutalized by the persistence of life in spite of crime; her gray hair ripples like sand under receding waves; her profile is strong and fine, but her eyes have a film of misery over them—dull and silent, they deaden her face. And Jennie, the charwoman, is she a cripple or has toil thus warped her body? Her arms, long and withered, swing like the broken branches of a gnarled tree; her back is twisted and her head bowed toward earth. A stranger to rest, she seems a mechanical creature wound up for work and run down in the middle of a task.

What could be hoped for in such surroundings? With every effort to be clean the dirt accumulates faster than it can be washed away. It was impossible, I found by my own experience, to be really clean. There was a total absence of beauty in everything—not a line of grace, not a pleasing sound, not an agreeable odour anywhere. One could get used to this ugliness, become unconscious even of the acrid smells that pervade the tenement. It was probable my comrades felt at no time the discomfort I did, but the harm done them is not the physical suffering their condition causes, but the moral and spiritual bondage in which it holds them. They are not a class of drones made differently

from us. I saw nothing to indicate that they were not born with like *capacities* to ours. As our bodies accustom themselves to luxury and cleanliness, theirs grow hardened to deprivation and filth. As our souls develop with the advantages of all that constitutes an ideal—an intellectual, esthetic and moral ideal—their souls diminish under the oppression of a constant physical effort to meet material demands. The fact that they become physically callous to what we consider unbearable is used as an argument for their emotional insensibility. I hold such an argument as false. From all I saw I am convinced that, *given their relative preparation* for suffering and for pleasure, their griefs and their joys are the same as ours in kind and in degree.

. . . . . .

When one is accustomed to days begun at will by the summons of a tidy maid, waking oneself at half-past five means to be guardian of the hours until this time arrives. Once up, the toilet I made in the nocturnal darkness of my room can best be described by the matron's remark to me as I went to bed: "If you want to wash," she said, "you'd better wash now; you can't have no water in your room, and there won't be nobody up when you leave in the morning." My evening bath is supplemented by a whisk of the sponge at five.

Without it is black—a more intense black than night's beginning, when all is astir. The streets are

silent, an occasional train whirls past, groups of men hurry hither and thither swinging their arms, rubbing their ears in the freezing air. Many of them have neither overcoats nor gloves. Now and then a woman sweeps along. Her skirts have the same swing as my own short ones; under her arm she carries a newspaper bundle whose meaning I have grown to know. My own contains a midday meal: two cold fried oysters, two dried preserve sandwiches, a pickle and an orange. My way lies across a bridge. In the first gray of dawn the river shows black under its burden of ice. Along its troubled banks innumerable chimneys send forth their hot activity, clouds of seething flames, waving arms of smoke and steam—a symbol of spent energy, of the lives consumed and vanishing again, the sparks that shine an instant against the dark sky and are spent forever.

As I draw nearer the factory I move with a stream of fellow workers pouring toward the glass cage of the timekeeper. He greets me and starts me on my upward journey with a wish that I shall not get discouraged, a reminder that the earnest worker always makes a way for herself.

"What will you do about your name?" "What will you do with your hair and your hands?" "How can you deceive people?" These are some of the questions I had been asked by my friends.

Before any one had cared or needed to know my

name it was morning of the second day, and my assumed name seemed by that time the only one I had ever had. As to hair and hands, a half-day's work suffices for their undoing. And my disguise is so successful I have deceived not only others but myself. I have become with desperate reality a factory girl, alone, inexperienced, friendless. I am making $4.20 a week and spending $3 of this for board alone, and I dread not being strong enough to keep my job. I climb endless stairs, am given a white cap and an apron, and my life as a factory girl begins. I become part of the ceaseless, unrelenting mechanism kept in motion by the poor.

The factory I have chosen has been built contemporaneously with reforms and sanitary inspection. There are clean, well-aired rooms, hot and cold water with which to wash, places to put one's hat and coat, an obligatory uniform for regular employees, hygienic and moral advantages of all kinds, ample space for work without crowding.

Side by side in rows of tens or twenties we stand before our tables waiting for the seven o'clock whistle to blow. In their white caps and blue frocks and aprons, the girls in my department, like any unfamiliar class, all look alike. My first task is an easy one; anybody could do it. On the stroke of seven my fingers fly. I place a lid of paper in a tin jar-top, over it a cork; this I press down with both hands, tossing the cover, when done, into a pan. In spite

of myself I hurry; I cannot work fast enough—I outdo my companions. How can they be so slow? I have finished three dozen while they are doing two. Every nerve, every muscle is offering some of its energy. Over in one corner the machinery for sealing the jars groans and roars; the mingled sounds of filling, washing, wiping, packing, comes to my eager ears as an accompaniment for the simple work assigned to me. One hour passes, two, three hours; I fit ten, twenty, fifty dozen caps, and still my energy keeps up.

The forewoman is a pretty girl of twenty. Her restless eyes, her metallic voice are the messengers who would know all. I am afraid of her. I long to please her. I am sure she must be saying "*How well the new girl works.*"

Conversation is possible among those whose work has become mechanical. Twice I am sent to the storeroom for more caps. In these brief moments my companions volunteer a word of themselves.

"I was out to a ball last night," the youngest one says. "I stayed so late I didn't feel a bit like getting up this morning."

"That's nothing," another retorts. "There's hardly an evening we don't have company at the house, music or somethin'; I never get enough rest."

And on my second trip the pale creature with me says:

"I'm in deep mourning. My mother died last

Friday week. It's awful lonely without her. Seems as though I'd never get over missing her. I miss her *dreadful*. Perhaps by and by I'll get used to it."

"Oh, no, you won't," the answer comes from a girl with short skirts. "You'll never get used to it. My ma's been dead eight years next month and I dreamt about her all last night. I can't get her out o' me mind."

Born into dirt and ugliness, disfigured by effort, they have the same heritage as we: joys and sorrows, grief and laughter. With them as with us gaiety is up to its old tricks, tempting from graver rivals, making duty an alien. Grief is doing her ugly work: hollowing round cheeks, blackening bright eyes, putting her weight of leaden loneliness in hearts heretofore light with youth.

When I have fitted 110 dozen tin caps the forewoman comes and changes my job. She tells me to haul and load up some heavy crates with pickle jars. I am wheeling these back and forth when the twelve o'clock whistle blows. Up to that time the room has been one big dynamo, each girl a part of it. With the first moan of the noon signal the dynamo comes to life. It is hungry; it has friends and favourites—news to tell. We herd down to a big dining-room and take our places, five hundred of us in all. The newspaper bundles are unfolded. The ménu varies little: bread and jam, cake and pickles, occasionally

a sausage, a bit of cheese or a piece of stringy cold meat. In ten minutes the repast is over. The dynamo has been fed; there are twenty minutes of leisure spent in dancing, singing, resting, and conversing chiefly about young men and "sociables."

At 12:30 sharp the whistle draws back the life it has given. I return to my job. My shoulders are beginning to ache. My hands are stiff, my thumbs almost blistered. The enthusiasm I had felt is giving way to a numbing weariness. I look at my companions now in amazement. How can they keep on so steadily, so swiftly? Cases are emptied and refilled; bottles are labeled, stamped and rolled away; jars are washed, wiped and loaded, and still there are more cases, more jars, more bottles. Oh! the monotony of it, the never-ending supply of work to be begun and finished, begun and finished, begun and finished! Now and then some one cuts a finger or runs a splinter under the flesh; once the mustard machine broke—and still the work goes on, on, on! New girls like myself, who had worked briskly in the morning, are beginning to loiter. Out of the washing-tins hands come up red and swollen, only to be plunged again into hot dirty water. Would the whistle never blow? Once I pause an instant, my head dazed and weary, my ears strained to bursting with the deafening noise. Quickly a voice whispers in my ear:

"You'd better not stand there doin' nothin'. If *she* catches you she'll give it to you."

On! on! bundle of pains! For you this is one day's work in a thousand of peace and beauty. For those about you this is the whole of daylight, this is the winter dawn and twilight, this is the glorious summer noon, this is all day, this is every day, this is *life*. Rest is only a bit of a dream, snatched when the sleeper's aching body lets her close her eyes for a moment in oblivion.

Out beyond the chimney tops the snowfields and the river turn from gray to pink, and still the work goes on. Each crate I lift grows heavier, each bottle weighs an added pound. Now and then some one lends a helping hand.

"Tired, ain't you? This is your first day, ain't it?"

The acid smell of vinegar and mustard penetrates everywhere. My ankles cry out pity. Oh! to sit down an instant!

"Tidy up the table," some one tells me; "we're soon goin' home."

Home! I think of the stifling fumes of fried food, the dim haze in the kitchen where my supper waits me; the children, the band of drifting workers, the shrill, complaining voice of the hired mother. This is home.

I sweep and set to rights, limping, lurching along. At last the whistle blows! In a swarm we report;

we put on our things and get away into the cool night air. I have stood ten hours; I have fitted 1,300 corks; I have hauled and loaded 4,000 jars of pickles. My pay is seventy cents.

The impressions of my first day crowd pell-mell upon my mind. The sound of the machinery dins in my ears. I can hear the sharp, nasal voices of the forewoman and the girls shouting questions and answers.

A sudden recollection comes to me of a Dahomayan family I had watched at work in their hut during the Paris Exhibition. There was a magic spell in their voices as they talked together; the sounds they made had the cadence of the wind in the trees, the running of water, the song of birds: they echoed unconsciously the caressing melodies of nature. My factory companions drew their vocal inspiration from the bedlam of civilization, the rasping and pounding of machinery, the din which they must out-din to be heard.

For the two days following my first experience I am unable to resume work. Fatigue has swept through my blood like a fever. Every bone and joint has a clamouring ache. I pass the time visiting other factories and hunting for a place to board in the neighbourhood of the pickling house. At the cork works they do not need girls; at the cracker company I can get a job, but the hours are longer, the advantages less than where I am; at the broom

factory they employ only men. I decide to continue with tin caps and pickle jars.

My whole effort now is to find a respectable boarding-house. I start out, the thermometer near zero, the snow falling. I wander and ask, wander and ask. Up and down the black streets running parallel and at right angles with the factory I tap and ring at one after another of the two-story red-brick houses. More than half of them are empty, tenantless during the working hours. What hope is there for family life near the hearth which is abandoned at the factory's first call? The sociableness, the discipline, the division of responsibility make factory work a dangerous rival to domestic care. There is something in the modern conditions of labour which act magnetically upon American girls, impelling them to work not for bread alone, but for clothes and finery as well. Each class in modern society knows a menace to its homes: sport, college education, machinery—each is a factor in the gradual transformation of family life from a united domestic group to a collection of individuals with separate interests and aims outside the home.

I pursue my search. It is the dinner hour. At last a narrow door opens, letting a puff of hot rank air blow upon me as I stand in the vestibule questioning: "Do you take boarders?"

The woman who answers stands with a spoon in her hand, her eyes fixed upon a rear room

where a stove, laden with frying-pans, glows and sputters.

"Come in," she says, "and get warm."

I walk into a front parlour with furniture that evidently serves domestic as well as social purposes. There is a profusion of white knitted tidies and portieres that exude an odour of cooking. Before the fire a workingman sits in a blue shirt and overalls. Fresh from the barber's hands, he has a clean mask marked by the razor's edge. Already I feel at home.

"Want board, do you?" the woman asks. "Well, we ain't got no place; we're always right full up."

My disappointment is keen. Regretfully I leave the fire and start on again.

"I guess you'll have some trouble in finding what you want," the woman calls to me on her way back to the kitchen, as I go out.

The answer is everywhere the same, with slight variations. Some take "mealers" only, some only "roomers," some "only gentlemen." I begin to understand it. Among the thousands of families who live in the city on account of the work provided by the mills, there are girls enough to fill the factories. There is no influx such as creates in a small town the necessity for working-girl boarding-houses. There is an ample supply of hands from the existing homes. There is the same difference between city and

country factory life that there is between university life in a capital and in a country town.

A sign on a neat-looking corner house attracts me. I rap and continue to rap; the door is opened at length by a tall good-looking young woman. Her hair curls prettily, catching the light; her eyes are stupid and beautiful. She has on a black skirt and a bright purple waist.

"Do you take boarders?"

"Why, yes. I don't generally like to take ladies, they give so much trouble. You can come in if you like. Here's the room," she continues, opening a door near the vestibule. She brushes her hand over her forehead and stares at me; and then, as though she can no longer silence the knell that is ringing in her heart, she says to me, always staring:

"My husband was killed on the railroad last week. He lived three hours. They took him to the hospital —a boy come running down and told me. I went up as fast as I could, but it was too late; he never spoke again. I guess he didn't know what struck him; his head was all smashed. He was awful good to me—so easy-going. I ain't got my mind down to work yet. If you don't like this here room," she goes on listlessly, "maybe you could get suited across the way."

Thompson Seton tells us in his book on wild animals that not one among them ever dies a natural death. As the opposite extreme of vital persistence

we have the man whose life, in spite of acute disease, is prolonged against reason by science; and midway comes the labourer, who takes his chances unarmed by any understanding of physical law, whose only safeguards are his wits and his presence of mind. The violent death, the accidents, the illnesses to which he falls victim might be often warded off by proper knowledge. Nature is a zealous enemy; ignorance and inexperience keep a whole class defenseless.

The next day is Saturday. I feel a fresh excitement at going back to my job; the factory draws me toward it magnetically. I long to be in the hum and whir of the busy workroom. Two days of leisure without resources or amusement make clear to me how the sociability of factory life, the freedom from personal demands, the escape from self can prove a distraction to those who have no mental occupation, no money to spend on diversion. It is easier to submit to factory government which commands five hundred girls with one law valid for all, than to undergo the arbitrary discipline of parental authority. I speed across the snow-covered courtyard. In a moment my cap and apron are on and I am sent to report to the head forewoman.

"We thought you'd quit," she says. "Lots of girls come in here and quit after one day, especially Saturday. To-day is scrubbing day," she smiles at me. "Now we'll do right by you if you do

right by us. What did the timekeeper say he'd give you?"

"Sixty or seventy a day."

"We'll give you seventy," she says. "Of course, we can judge girls a good deal by their looks, and we can see that you're above the average."

She wears her cap close against her head. Her front hair is rolled up in crimping-pins. She has false teeth and is a widow. Her pale, parched face shows what a great share of life has been taken by daily over-effort repeated during years. As she talks she touches my arm in a kindly fashion and looks at me with blue eyes that float about under weary lids. "You are only at the beginning," they seem to say. "Your youth and vigour are at full tide, but drop by drop they will be sapped from you, to swell the great flood of human effort that supplies the world's material needs. You will gain in experience," the weary lids flutter at me, "but you will pay *with your life* the living you make."

There is no variety in my morning's work. Next to me is a bright, pretty girl jamming chopped pickles into bottles.

"How long have you been here?" I ask, attracted by her capable appearance. She does her work easily and well.

"About five months."

"How much do you make?"

"From 90 cents to $1.05. I'm doing piece-work,"

she explains. "I get seven-eighths of a cent for every dozen bottles I fill. I have to fill eight dozen to make seven cents. Downstairs in the corking-room you can make as high as $1.15 to $1.20. They won't let you make any more than that. Me and them two girls over there are the only ones in this room doing piece-work. I was here three weeks as a day-worker."

"Do you live at home?" I ask.

"Yes; I don't have to work. I don't pay no board. My father and my brothers supports me and my mother. But," and her eyes twinkle, "I couldn't have the clothes I do if I didn't work."

"Do you spend your money all on yourself?"

"Yes."

I am amazed at the cheerfulness of my companions. They complain of fatigue, of cold, but never at any time is there a suggestion of ill-humour. Their suppressed animal spirits reassert themselves when the forewoman's back is turned. Companionship is the great stimulus. I am confident that without the social *entrain*, the encouragement of example, it would be impossible to obtain as much from each individual girl as is obtained from them in groups of tens, fifties, hundreds working together.

When lunch is over we are set to scrubbing. Every table and stand, every inch of the factory floor must be scrubbed in the next four hours. The whistle on Saturday blows an hour earlier. Any girl who has not finished her work when the day is

done, so that she can leave things in perfect order, is kept overtime, for which she is paid at the rate of six or seven cents an hour. A pail of hot water, a dirty rag and a scrubbing-brush are thrust into my hands. I touch them gingerly. I get a broom and for some time make sweeping a necessity, but the forewoman is watching me. I am afraid of her. There is no escape. I begin to scrub. My hands go into the brown, slimy water and come out brown and slimy. I slop the soap-suds around and move on to a fresh place. It appears there are a right and a wrong way of scrubbing. The forewoman is at my side.

"Have you ever scrubbed before?" she asks sharply. This is humiliating.

"Yes," I answer; "I have scrubbed . . . oil-cloth."

The forewoman knows how to do everything. She drops down on her knees and, with her strong arms and short-thumbed, brutal hands, she shows me how to scrub.

The grumbling is general. There is but one opinion among the girls: it is not right that they should be made to do this work. They all echo the same resentment, but their complaints are made in whispers; not one has the courage to openly rebel. What, I wonder to myself, do the men do on scrubbing day. I try to picture one of them on his hands and knees in a sea of brown mud. It is impossible.

The next time I go for a supply of soft soap in a department where the men are working I take a look at the masculine interpretation of house cleaning. One man is playing a hose on the floor and the rest are rubbing the boards down with long-handled brooms and rubber mops.

"You take it easy," I say to the boss.

"I won't have no scrubbing in my place," he answers emphatically. "The first scrubbing day, they says to me 'Get down on your hands and knees,' and I says—'Just pay me my money, will you; I'm goin' home. What scrubbing can't be done with mops ain't going to be done by me.' The women wouldn't have to scrub, either, if they had enough spirit all of 'em to say so."

I determined to find out if possible, during my stay in the factory, what it is that clogs this mainspring of "spirit" in the women.

I hear fragmentary conversations about fancy dress balls, valentine parties, church sociables, flirtations and clothes. Almost all of the girls wear shoes with patent leather and some or much cheap jewelry, brooches, bangles and rings. A few draw their corsets in; the majority are not laced. Here and there I see a new girl whose back is flat, whose chest is well developed. Among the older hands who have begun work early there is not a straight pair of shoulders. Much of the bottle washing and filling is done by children from twelve to fourteen

years of age. On their slight, frail bodies toil weighs heavily; the delicate child form gives way to the iron hand of labour pressed too soon upon it. Backs bend earthward, chests recede, never to be sound again.

. . . . . .

After a Sunday of rest I arrive somewhat ahead of time on Monday morning, which leaves me a few moments for conversation with a piece-worker who is pasting labels on mustard jars. She is fifteen.

"Do you like your job?" I ask.

"Yes, I do," she answers, pleased to tell her little history. "I began in a clothing shop. I only made $2.50 a week, but I didn't have to stand. I felt awful when papa made me quit. When I came in here, bein' on my feet tired me so I cried every night for two months. Now I've got used to it. I don't feel no more tired when I get home than I did when I started out." There are two sharp blue lines that drag themselves down from her eyes to her white cheeks.

"Why, you know, at Christmas they give us two weeks," she goes on in the sociable tone of a woman whose hands are occupied. "I just didn't know what to do with myself."

"Does your mother work?"

"Oh, my, no. I don't have to work, only if I didn't I couldn't have the clothes I do. I save

some of my money and spend the rest on myself. I make $6 to $7 a week."

The girl next us volunteers a share in the conversation.

"I bet you can't guess how old I am."

I look at her. Her face and throat are wrinkled, her hands broad and scrawny; she is tall and has short skirts. What shall be my clue? If I judge by pleasure, "unborn" would be my answer; if by effort, then "a thousand years."

"Twenty," I hazard as a safe medium.

"Fourteen," she laughs. "I don't like it at home, the kids bother me so. Mamma's people are well-to-do. I'm working for my own pleasure."

"Indeed, I wish I was," says a new girl with a red waist. "We three girls supports mamma and runs the house. We have $13 rent to pay and a load of coal every month and groceries. It's no joke, I can tell you."

The whistle blows; I go back to my monotonous task. The old aches begin again, first gently, then more and more sharply. The work itself is growing more mechanical. I can watch the girls around me. What is it that determines superiority in this class? Why was the girl filling pickle jars put on piece-work after three weeks, when others older than she are doing day-work at fifty and sixty cents after a year in the factory? What quality decides that four shall direct four hundred? Intelligence I put first;

intelligence of any kind, from the natural penetration that needs no teaching to the common sense that every one relies upon. Judgment is not far behind in the list, and it is soon matured by experience. A strong will and a moral steadiness stand guardians over the other two. The little pickle girl is winning in the race by her intelligence. The forewomen have all four qualities, sometimes one, sometimes another predominating. Pretty Clara is smarter than Lottie. Lottie is more steady. Old Mrs. Minns' will has kept her at it until her judgment has become infallible and can command a good price. Annie is an evenly balanced mixture of all, and the five hundred who are working under the five lack these qualities somewhat, totally, or have them in useless proportions.

Monday is a hard day. There is more complaining, more shirking, more gossip than in the middle of the week. Most of the girls have been to dances on Saturday night, to church on Sunday evening with some young man. Their conversation is vulgar and prosaic; there is nothing in the language they use that suggests an ideal or any conception of the abstract. They make jokes, state facts about the work, tease each other, but in all they say there is not a word of value—nothing that would interest if repeated out of its class. They have none of the sagaciousness of the low-born Italian, none of the wit and penetration of the French *ouvriere*. The Old

World generations ago divided itself into classes; the lower class watched the upper and grew observant and appreciative, wise and discriminating, through the study of a master's will. Here in the land of freedom, where no class line is rigid, the precious chance is not to serve but to live for oneself; not to watch a superior, but to find out by experience. The ideal plays no part, stern realities alone count, and thus we have a progressive, practical, independent people, the expression of whose personality is interesting not through their words but by their deeds.

When the Monday noon whistle blows I follow the hundreds down into the dining-room. Each wears her cap in a way that speaks for her temperament. There is the indifferent, the untidy, the prim, the vain, the coquettish; and the faces under them, which all looked alike at first, are becoming familiar. I have begun to make friends. I speak bad English, but do not attempt to change my voice and inflection nor to adopt the twang. No allusion is made to my pronunciation except by one girl, who says:

"I knew you was from the East. My sister spent a year in Boston and when she come back she talked just like you do, but she lost it all again. I'd give anything if I could talk *aristocratic*."

I am beginning to understand why the meager lunches of preserve-sandwiches and pickles more than satisfy the girls whom I was prepared to

accuse of spending their money on gewgaws rather than on nourishment. It is fatigue that steals the appetite. I can hardly taste what I put in my mouth; the food sticks in my throat. The girls who complain most of being tired are the ones who roll up their newspaper bundles half full. They should be given an hour at noon. The first half of it should be spent in rest and recreation before a bite is touched. The good that such a regulation would work upon their faulty skins and pale faces, their lasting strength and health, would be incalculable. I did not want wholesome food, exhausted as I was. I craved sours and sweets, pickles, cake, anything to excite my numb taste.

So long as I remain in the bottling department there is little variety in my days. Rising at 5:30 every morning, I make my way through black streets to offer my sacrifice of energy on the altar of toil. All is done without a fresh incident. Accumulated weariness forces me to take a day off. When I return I am sent for in the corking-room. The forewoman lends me a blue gingham dress and tells me I am to do "piece"-work. There are three who work together at every corking-table. My two companions are a woman with goggles and a one-eyed boy. We are not a brilliant trio. The job consists in evening the vinegar in the bottles, driving the cork in, first with a machine, then with a hammer, letting out the air with a knife stuck under the

cork, capping the corks, sealing the caps, counting and distributing the bottles. These operations are paid for at the rate of one-half a cent for the dozen bottles, which sum is divided among us. My two companions are earning a living, so I must work in dead earnest or take bread out of their mouths. At every blow of the hammer there is danger. Again and again bottles fly to pieces in my hand. The boy who runs the corking-machine smashes a glass to fragments.

"Are you hurt?" I ask, my own fingers crimson stained.

"That ain't nothin'," he answers. "Cuts is common; my hands is full of 'em."

The woman directs us; she is fussy and loses her head, the work accumulates, I am slow, the boy is clumsy. There is a stimulus unsuspected in working to get a job done. Before this I had worked to make the time pass. Then no one took account of how much I did; the factory clock had a weighted pendulum; now ambition outdoes physical strength. The hours and my purpose are running a race together. But, hurry as I may, as we do, when twelve blows its signal we have corked only 210 dozen bottles! This is no more than day-work at seventy cents. With an ache in every muscle, I redouble my energy after lunch. The girl with the goggles looks at me blindly and says:

"Ain't it just awful hard work? You can make good money, but you've got to hustle."

She is a forlorn specimen of humanity, ugly, old, dirty, condemned to the slow death of the overworked. I am a green hand. I make mistakes; I have no experience in the fierce sustained effort of the bread-winners. Over and over I turn to her, over and over she is obliged to correct me. During the ten hours we work side by side not one murmur of impatience escapes her. When she sees that I am getting discouraged she calls out across the deafening din, "That's all right; you can't expect to learn in a day; just keep on steady."

As I go about distributing bottles to the labelers I notice a strange little elf, not more than twelve years old, hauling loaded crates; her face and chest are depressed, she is pale to blueness, her eyes have indigo circles, her pupils are unnaturally dilated, her brows contracted; she has the appearance of a cave-bred creature. She seems scarcely human. When the time for cleaning up arrives toward five my boss sends me for a bucket of water to wash up the floor. I go to the sink, turn on the cold water and with it the steam which takes the place of hot water. The valve slips; in an instant I am enveloped in a scalding cloud. Before it has cleared away the elf is by my side.

"Did you hurt yourself?" she asks.

Her inhuman form is the vehicle of a human heart, warm and tender. She lifts her wide-pupiled eyes to mine; her expression does not change from

that of habitual scrutiny cast early in a rigid mould, but her voice carries sympathy from its purest source.

There is more honour than courtesy in the code of etiquette. Commands are given curtly; the slightest injustice is resented; each man for himself in work, but in trouble all for the one who is suffering. No bruise or cut or burn is too familiar a sight to pass uncared for.

It is their common sufferings, their common effort that unites them.

When I have become expert in the corking art I am raised to a better table, with a bright boy, and a girl who is dignified and indifferent with the indifference of those who have had too much responsibility. She never hurries; the work slips easily through her fingers. She keeps a steady bearing over the morning's ups and downs. Under her load of trials there is something big in the steady way she sails.

"Used to hard work?" she asks me.

"Not much," I answer; "are you?"

"Oh, yes. I began at thirteen in a bakery. I had a place near the oven and the heat overcame me."

Her shoulders are bowed, her chest is hollow.

"Looking for a boarding place near the factory, I hear," she continues.

"Yes. You live at home, I suppose."

"Yes. There's four of us: mamma, papa, my sister and myself. Papa's blind."

"Can't he work?"

"Oh, yes, he creeps to his job every morning, and he's got so much experience he kind o' does things by instinct."

"Does your mother work?"

"Oh, my, no. My sister's an invalid. She hasn't been out o' the door for three years. She's got enlargement of the heart and consumption, too, I guess; she 'takes' hemorrhages. Sometimes she has twelve in one night. Every time she coughs the blood comes foaming out of her mouth. She can't lie down. I guess she'd die if she lay down, and she gets so tired sittin' up all night. She used to be a tailoress, but I guess her job didn't agree with her."

"How many checks have we got," I ask toward the close of the day.

"Thirteen," Ella answers.

"An unlucky number," I venture, hoping to arouse an opinion.

"Are you superstitious?" she asks, continuing to twist tin caps on the pickle jars. "I am. If anything's going to happen I can't help having presentiments, and they come true, too."

Here is a mystic, I thought; so I continued:

"And what about dreams?"

"Oh!" she cried. "Dreams! I have the queerest of anybody!"

I was all attention.

"Why, last night," she drew near to me and spoke

slowly, "I dreamed that mamma was drunk, and that she was stealing chickens!"

Such is the imagination of this weary worker.

The whole problem in mechanical labour rests upon economy of force. The purpose of each, I learned by experience, was to accomplish as much as possible with one single stroke. In this respect the machine is superior to man, and man to woman. Sometimes I tried original ways of doing the work given me. I soon found in every case that the methods proposed by the forewoman were in the end those whereby I could do the greatest amount of work with the least effort. A mustard machine had recently been introduced to the factory. It replaced three girls; it filled as many bottles with a single stroke as the girls could fill with twelve. This machine and all the others used were run by boys or men; the girls had not strength enough to manipulate them methodically.

The power of the machine, the physical force of the man were simplifying their tasks. While the boy was keeping steadily at one thing, perfecting himself, we, the women, were doing a variety of things, complicated and fussy, left to our lot because we had not physical force for the simpler but greater effort. The boy at the corking-table had soon become an expert; he was fourteen and he made from $1 to $1.20 a day. He worked ten hours at one job, whereas Ella and I had a dozen little jobs

almost impossible to systematize: we hammered and cut and capped the corks and washed and wiped the bottles, sealed them, counted them, distributed them, kept the table washed up, the sink cleaned out, and once a day scrubbed up our own precincts. When I asked the boy if he was tired he laughed at me. He was superior to us; he was stronger; he could do more with one stroke than we could do with three; he was by *nature* a more valuable aid than we. We were forced through physical inferiority to abandon the choicest task to this young male competitor. Nature had given us a handicap at the start.

For a few days there is no vacancy at the corking-tables. I am sent back to the bottling department. The oppressive monotony is one day varied by a summons to the men's dining-room. I go eagerly, glad of any change. In the kitchen I find a girl with skin disease peeling potatoes, and a coloured man making soup in a wash-boiler. The girl gives me a stool to sit on, and a knife and a pan of potatoes. The dinner under preparation is for the men of the factory. There are two hundred of them. They are paid from $1.35 up to $3 a day. Their wages begin above the highest limit given to women. The dinner costs each man ten cents. The $20 paid in daily cover the expenses of the cook, two kitchen maids and the dinner, which consists of meat, bread and butter, vegetables and coffee, sometimes soup,

sometimes dessert. If this can pay for two hundred there is no reason why for five cents a hot meal of some kind could not be given the women. They don't demand it, so they are left to make themselves ill on pickles and preserves.

The coloured cook is full of song and verse. He quotes from the Bible freely, and gives us snatches of popular melodies.

We have frequent calls from the elevator boy, who brings us ice and various provisions. Both men, I notice, take their work easily. During the morning a busy Irish woman comes hurrying into our precincts.

"Say," she yells in a shrill voice, "my cauliflowers ain't here, are they? I ordered 'em early and they ain't came yet."

Without properly waiting for an answer she hurries away again.

The coloured cook turns to the elevator boy understandingly:

"Just like a woman! Why, before I'd *make a fuss* about cauliflowers or anything else!"

About eleven the head forewoman stops in to eat a plate of rice and milk. While I am cutting bread for the two hundred I hear her say to the cook in a gossipy tone:

"How do you like the new girl? She's here all alone."

I am called away and do not hear the rest of the

conversation. When I return the cook lectures me in this way:

"Here alone, are you?"

"Yes."

"Well, I see no reason why you shouldn't get along nicely and not kill yourself with work either. Just stick at it and they'll do right by you. Lots o' girls who's here alone gets to fooling around. Now I like everybody to have a good time, and I hope you'll have a good time, too, but you mustn't carry it too far."

My mind went back as he said this to a conversation I had had the night before with a working-girl at my boarding-house.

"Where is your home?" I asked.

She had been doing general housework, but ill-health had obliged her to take a rest.

She looked at me skeptically.

"We don't have no homes," was her answer. "We just get up and get whenever they send us along."

And almost as a sequel to this I thought of two sad cases that had come close to my notice as fellow boarders.

I was sitting alone one night by the gas stove in the parlour. The matron had gone out and left me to "answer the door." The bell rang and I opened cautiously, for the wind was howling and driving the snow and sleet about on the winter air. A

young girl came in; she was seeking a lodging. Her skirts and shoes were heavy with water. She took off her things slowly in a dazed manner. Her short, quick breathing showed how excited she was. When she spoke at last her voice sounded hollow, her eyes moved about restlessly. She stopped abruptly now and then and contracted her brows as though in an appeal for merciful tears; then she continued in the same broken, husky voice:

"I suppose I'm not the only one in trouble. I've thought a thousand times over that I would kill myself. I suppose I loved him—but I *hate* him now."

These two sentences, recurring, were the story's all.

The impotence of rebellion, a sense of outrage at being abandoned, the instinctive appeal for protection as a right, the injustice of being left solely to bear the burden of responsibility which so long as it was pleasure had been shared—these were the thoughts and feelings breeding hatred.

She had spent the day in a fruitless search for her lover. She had been to his boss and to his rooms. He had paid his debts and gone, nobody knew where. She was pretty, vain, homeless; alone to bear the responsibility she had not been alone to incur. She could not shirk it as the man had done. They had both disregarded the law. On whom were the consequences weighing more heavily? On the

woman. She is the sufferer; she is the first to miss the law's protection. She is the weaker member whom, for the sake of the race, society protects. Nature has made her man's physical inferior; society is obliged to recognize this in the giving of a marriage law which beyond doubt is for the benefit of woman, since she can least afford to disregard it.

Another evening when the matron was out I sat for a time with a young working woman and her baby. There is a comradeship among the poor that makes light of indiscreet questions. I felt only sympathy in asking:

"Are you alone to bring up your child?"

"Yes, ma'am," was the answer. "I'll never go home with *him*."

I looked at *him*: a wizened, four-months-old infant with a huge flat nose, and two dull black eyes fixed upon the gas jet. The girl had the grace of a forest-born creature; she moved with the mysterious strength and suppleness of a tree's branch. She was proud; she felt herself disgraced. For four months she had not left the house. I talked on, proposing different things.

"I don't know what to do," she said. "I can't never go home with *him*, and if I went home without him I'd never be the same. I don't know what I'd do if anything happened to *him*." Her head bowed over the child; she held him close to her breast.

But to return to the coloured cook and my day in

the kitchen. I had ample opportunity to compare domestic service with factory work. We set the table for two hundred, and do a thousand miserable slavish tasks that must be begun again the following day. At twelve the two hundred troop in, toil-worn and begrimed. They pass like locusts, leaving us sixteen hundred dirty dishes to wash up and wipe. This takes us four hours, and when we have finished the work stands ready to be done over the next morning with peculiar monotony. In the factory there is stimulus in feeling that the material which passes through one's hands will never be seen or heard of again.

On Saturday the owner of the factory comes at lunch time with several friends and talks to us with an amazing *camaraderie*. He is kindly, humourous and tactful. One or two missionaries speak after him, but their conversation is too abstract for us. We want something dramatic, imaginative, to hold our attention, or something wholly natural. Tell us about the bees, the beavers or the toilers of the sea. The longing for flowers has often come to me as I work, and a rose seems of all things the most desirable. In my present condition I do not hark back to civilized wants, but repeatedly my mind travels toward the country places I have seen in the fields and forests. If I had a holiday I would spend it seeing not what man but what God has made. These are the things to be remembered in addressing

or trying to amuse or instruct girls who are no more prepared than I felt myself to be for any preconceived ideal of art or ethics. The omnipresence of dirt and ugliness, of machines and "stock," leave the mind in a state of lassitude which should be roused by something natural. As an initial remedy for the ills I voluntarily assumed I would propose amusement. Of all the people who spoke to us that Saturday, we liked best the one who made us laugh. It was a relief to hear something funny. In working as an outsider in a factory girls' club I had always held that nothing was so important as to give the poor something beautiful to look at and think about—a photograph or copy of some *chef d'oeuvre*, an *objet d'art*, lessons in literature and art which would uplift their souls from the dreariness of their surroundings. Three weeks as a factory girl had changed my beliefs. If the young society women who sacrifice one evening every week to talk to the poor in the slums about Shakespeare and Italian art would instead offer diversion first—a play, a farce, a humourous recitation—they would make much more rapid progress in winning the confidence of those whom they want to help. The working woman who has had a good laugh is more ready to tell what she needs and feels and fears than the woman who has been forced to listen silently to an abstract lesson. In society when we wish to make friends with people we begin by entertaining them.

It should be the same way with the poor. Next to amusement as a means of giving temporary relief and bringing about relations which will be helpful to all, I put instruction, in the form of narrative, about the people of other countries, our fellow man, how he lives and works; and, third, under this same head, primitive lessons about animals and plants, the industries of the bees, the habits of ants, the natural phenomena which require no reasoning power to understand and which open the thoughts upon a delightful unknown vista.

My first experience is drawing to its close. I have surmounted the discomforts of insufficient food, of dirt, a bed without sheets, the strain of hard manual labour. I have confined my observations to life and conditions in the factory. Owing, as I have before explained, to the absorption of factory life into city life in a place as large as Pittsburg, it seemed to me more profitable to centre my attention on the girl within the factory, leaving for a small town the study of her in her family and social life. I have pointed out as they appeared to me woman's relative force as a worker and its effects upon her economic advancement. I have touched upon two cases which illustrate her relative dependence on the law. She appeared to me not as the equal of man either physically or legally. It remained to study her socially. In the factory where I worked men and women were employed for ten-hour days.

The women's highest wages were lower than the man's lowest. Both were working as hard as they possibly could. The women were doing menial work, such as scrubbing, which the men refused to do. The men were properly fed at noon; the women satisfied themselves with cake and pickles. Why was this? It is of course impossible to generalize on a single factory. I can only relate the conclusions I drew from what I saw myself. The wages paid by employers, economists tell us, are fixed at the level of bare subsistence. This level and its accompanying conditions are determined by competition, by the nature and number of labourers taking part in the competition. In the masculine category I met but one class of competitor: the bread-winner. In the feminine category I found a variety of classes: the bread-winner, the semi-bread-winner, the woman who works for luxuries. This inevitably drags the wage level. The self-supporting girl is in competition with the child, with the girl who lives at home and makes a small contribution to the household expenses, and with the girl who is supported and who spends all her money on her clothes. It is this division of purpose which takes the "spirit" out of them as a class. There will be no strikes among them so long as the question of wages is not equally vital to them all. It is not only nature and the law which demand protection for women, but society as well. In every case of

the number I investigated, if there were sons, daughters or a husband in the family, the mother was not allowed to work. She was wholly protected. In the families where the father and brothers were making enough for bread and butter, the daughters were protected partially or entirely. There is no law which regulates this social protection: it is voluntary, and it would seem to indicate that civilized woman is meant to be an economic dependent. Yet, on the other hand, what is the new force which impels girls from their homes into the factories to work when they do not actually need the money paid them for their effort and sacrifice? Is it a move toward some far distant civilization when women shall have become man's physical equal, a "free, economic, social factor, making possible the full social combination of individuals in collective industry"? This is a matter for speculation only. What occurred to me as a possible remedy both for the oppression of the woman bread-winner and also as a betterment for the girl who wants to work though she does not need the money, was this: the establishment of schools where the esthetic branches of industrial art might be taught to the girls who by their material independence could give some leisure to acquiring a profession useful to themselves and to society in general. The whole country would be benefited by the opening of such schools as the Empress of Russia has patronized for the main-

tenance of the "petites industries," or those which Queen Margherita has established for the revival of lace-making in Italy. If there was such a counter-attraction to machine labour, the bread-winner would have a freer field and the non-bread-winner might still work for luxury and at the same time better herself morally, mentally and esthetically. She could aid in forming an intermediate class of labourers which as yet does not exist in America: the hand-workers, the *main d'oeuvre* who produce the luxurious objects of industrial art for which we are obliged to send to Europe when we wish to beautify our homes.

The American people are lively, intelligent, capable of learning anything. The schools of which I speak, founded, not for the manufacturing of the useful but of the beautiful, could be started informally as classes and by individual effort. Such labour would be paid more than the mechanical factory work; the immense importation from abroad of objects of industrial art sufficiently proves the demand for them in this country; there would be no material disadvantage for the girl who gave up her job in a pickle factory. Her faculties would be well employed, and she could, without leaving her home, do work which would be of esthetic and, indirectly, of moral value.

I was discouraged at first to see how difficult it was to help the working girls as individuals and how still more difficult to help them as a class. There is

perhaps no surer way of doing this than by giving opportunities to those who have a purpose and a will. No amount of openings will help the girl who has not both of these. I watched many girls with intelligence and energy who were unable to develop for the lack of a chance a start in the right direction. Aside from the few remedies I have been able to suggest, I would like to make an appeal for persistent sympathy in behalf of those whose misery I have shared. Until some marvelous advancement has been made toward the reign of justice upon earth, every man, woman and child should have constantly in his heart the sufferings of the poorest.

On the evening when I left the factory for the last time, I heard in the streets the usual cry of murders, accidents and suicides: the mental food of the overworked. It is Saturday night. I mingle with a crowd of labourers homeward bound, and with women and girls returning from a Saturday sale in the big shops. They hurry along delighted at the cheapness of a bargain, little dreaming of the human effort that has produced it, the cost of life and energy it represents. As they pass, they draw their skirts aside from us, the labourers who have made their bargains cheap; from us, the coöperators who enable them to have the luxuries they do; from us, the multitude who stand between them and the monster Toil that must be fed with human lives. Think of us, as we herd to our work in the winter

dawn; think of us as we bend over our task all the daylight without rest; think of us at the end of the day as we resume suffering and anxiety in homes of squalour and ugliness; think of us as we make our wretched try for merriment; think of us as we stand protectors between you and the labour that must be done to satisfy your material demands; think of us—be merciful.

"WAVING ARMS OF SMOKE AND STEAM, A SYMBOL OF SPENT ENERGY, OF THE LIVES CONSUMED, AND VANISHING AGAIN"

Factories on the Alleghany River at the 16th Street bridge, just below the pickle works

PERRY, A NEW YORK MILL TOWN

CHAPTER III

Perry, a New York Mill Town

No place in America could have afforded better than Pittsburg a chance to study the factory life of American girls, the stimulus of a new country upon the labourers of old races, the fervour and energy of a people animated by hope and stirred to activity by the boundless opportunities for making money. It is the labourers' city *par excellence;* and in my preceding chapters I have tried to give a clear picture of factory life between the hours of seven and six, of the economic conditions, of the natural social and legal equipment of woman as a working entity, of her physical, moral and esthetic development.

Now, since the time ticked out between the morning summoning whistle to that which gives release at night is not half the day, and only two-thirds of the working hours, my second purpose has been to find a place where the factory girl's own life could best be studied: her domestic, religious and sentimental life.

Somewhere in the western part of New York State, one of my comrades at the pickle works had told me,

there was a town whose population was chiefly composed of mill-hands. The name of the place was Perry, and I decided upon it as offering the typical American civilization among the working classes. New England is too free of grafts to give more than a single aspect; Pittsburg is an international bazaar; but the foundations of Perry are laid with bricks from all parts of the world, held together by a strong American cement.

Ignorant of Perry further than as it exists, a black spot on a branch of a small road near Buffalo, I set out from New York toward my destination on the Empire State Express. There was barely time to descend with my baggage at Rochester before the engine had started onward again, trailing behind it with world-renowned rapidity its freight of travelers who, for a few hours under the car's roof, are united by no other common interest than that of journeying quickly from one spot to another, where they disperse never to meet again. My Perry train had an altogether different character. I was late for it, but the brakeman saw me coming and waved to the engineer not to start until my trunk was checked and safely boarded like myself. Then we bumped our way through meadows quickened to life by the soft spring air; we halted at crossroads to pick up stray travelers and shoppers; we unloaded plowing machines and shipped crates of live fowl; we waited at wayside stations with high-sounding names

for family parties whose unpunctuality was indulgently considered by the occupants of the train.

My companions, chiefly women, were of the homely American type whose New England drawl has been modified by a mingling of foreign accents. They took advantage of this time for "visiting" with neighbours whom the winter snows and illnesses had rendered inaccessible. Their inquiries for each other were all kindliness and sympathy, and the peaceful, tolerant, uneventful way in which we journeyed from Rochester to Perry was a symbol of the way in which these good people had journeyed across life. Perry, the terminus of the line, was a frame station lodged on stilts in a sea of surrounding mud. When the engine had come to a standstill and ceased to pant, when the last truck had been unloaded, the baggage room closed, there were no noises to be heard except those that came from a neighbouring country upon whose peace the small town had not far encroached; the splash of a horse and buggy through the mud, a monotonous voice mingling with the steady tick of the telegraph machine, some distant barnyard chatter, and the mysterious, invisible stir of spring shaking out upon the air damp sweet odours calling the earth to colour and life. Descending the staircase which connected the railroad station with the hill road on which it was perched, I joined a man who was swinging along in rubber boots, with several farming tools, rakes

and hoes, slung over his shoulder. A repugnance I had felt in resuming my toil-worn clothes had led me to make certain modifications which I feared in so small a town as Perry might relegate me to the class I had voluntarily abandoned. The man in rubber boots looked me over as I approached, bag in hand, and to my salutation he replied:

"Going down to the mill, I suppose. There's lots o' ladies comes in the train every day now."

He was the perfection of tact; he placed me in one sentence as a mill-hand and a lady.

"I'll take you down as far as Main Street," he volunteered, giving me at once a feeling of kindly interest which "city folks" have not time to show.

We found our way by improvised crossings through broad, soft beds of mud. Among the branches of the sap-fed trees which lined the unpaved streets transparent balls of glass were suspended, from which, as twilight deepened, a brilliant artificial light shot its rays, the perfection of modern invention, over the primitive, unfinished little town of Perry, which was all contrast and energy, crudity and progress.

"There's a lot of the girls left the mill yesterday," my companion volunteered. "They cut the wages, and some of the oldest hands got right out. There's more than a thousand of 'em on the pay-roll, but I guess you can make good money if you're ready to work."

We had reached Main Street, which, owing to the absence of a trolley, had retained a certain individuality. · The rivers of mud broadened out into a sea, flanked by a double row of two-story, flat-roofed frame stores, whose monotony was interrupted by a hotel and a town hall. My guide stopped at a corner butcher shop. Its signboard was a couple of mild-eyed animals hanging head downward, presented informally, with their skins untouched, and having more the appearance of some ill-treated pets than future beef and bouillon for the Perry population.

"Follow the boardwalk!" was the simple command I received. "Keep right along until you come to the mill."

I presently fell in with a drayman, who was calling alternately to his horse as it sucked in and out of the mud and to a woman on the plank walk. She had on a hat with velvet and ostrich plumes, a black frock, a side bag with a lace handkerchief. She was not young and she wore spectacles; but there was something nervous about her step, a slight tremolo as she responded to the drayman, which suggested an adventure or the hope of it. The boardwalk, leading inevitably to the mill, announced our common purpose and saved us an introduction.

"Going down to get work?" was the question we simultaneously asked of each other. My companion,

all eagerness, shook out the lace handkerchief in her side bag and explained:

"I don't have to work; my folks keep a hotel; but I always heard so much about Perry I thought I'd like to come up, and," she sighed, with a flirt of the lace handkerchief and a contented glance around at the rows of white frame houses, "I'm up now."

"Want board?" the drayman called to me. "You kin count on me for a good place. There's Doctor Meadows, now; he's got a nice home and he just wants two boarders."

The middle-aged woman with the glasses glanced up quickly.

"Doctor Meadows of Tittihute?" she asked. "I wont go there; he's too strict. He's a Methodist minister. You couldn't have any fun at all."

I followed suit, denouncing Doctor Killjoy as she had, hoping that her nervous, frisky step would lead me toward the adventure she was evidently seeking.

"Well," the drayman responded indulgently, "I guess Mr. Norse will know the best place for you folks."

We had come at once to the factory and the end of the boardwalk. It was but a few minutes before Mr. Norse had revealed himself as the pivot, the human hub, the magnet around which the mechanism of the mill revolved and clung, sure of finding its proper balance. Tall, lank and meager, with a wrinkled face and a furtive mustache, Mr. Norse

made his rounds with a list of complaints and comments in one hand, a pencil in the other and a black cap on his head which tipped, indulgent, attentive to hear and overhear. His manner was professional. He looked at us, placed us, told us to return at one o'clock, recommended a boarding-house, and, on his way to some other case, sent a small boy to accompany us on future stretches of boardwalk to our lodgings. The street we followed ended in a rolling hillside, and beyond was the mysterious blue that holds something of the infinite in its mingling of clouds and shadows. The Geneseo Valley lay near us like a lake under the sky, and silhouetted against it were the factory chimney and buildings. The wood's edge came close to the town, whose yards prolong themselves into green meadows and farming lands. We knocked at a rusty screen door and were welcomed with the cordiality of the country woman to whom all folks are neighbours, all strangers possible boarders. The house, built without mantelpiece or chimney, atoned for this cheerlessness with a large parlour stove, whose black arms carried warmth through floor and ceiling. A table was spread in the dining-room. A loud-ticking clock with a rusty bell marked the hour from a shelf on the wall, and out of the kitchen, seen in vista, came a spluttering sound of frying food. Our hostess took us into the parlour. Several family pictures of stony-eyed women and men with chin beards, and a life-sized

Frances Willard in chromo, looked down at our ensuing interview.

Board, lodging, heat and light we could have at $2.75 a week. Before the husky clock had struck twelve, I was installed in a small room with the middle-aged woman from Batavia and a second unknown roommate.

Now what, I asked myself, is the mill's attraction and what is the power of this small town? Its population is 3,346. Of these, 1,000 work in the knitting-mill, 200 more in a cutlery factory and 300 in various flour, butter, barrel, planing mills and salt blocks. Half the inhabitants are young hands. Not one in a hundred has a home in Perry; they have come from all western parts of the State to work. There are scarcely any children, few married couples and almost no old people. It is a town of youthful contemporaries, stung with the American's ambition for independence and adventure, charmed by the gaiety of being boys and girls together, with an ever possible touch of romance which makes the hardest work seem easy. Within the four board walls of each house, whose type is repeated up and down Perry streets, there is a group of factory employees boarding and working at the mill. Their names suggest a foreign parentage, but for several generations they have mingled their diverse energies in a common effort which makes Americans of them.

As I lived for several weeks among a group of this

kind, who were fairly representative, I shall try to give, through a description of their life and conversation, their personalities and characteristics, their occupations out of working hours, a general idea of these unknown toilers, who are so amazingly like their more fortunate sisters that I became convinced the difference is only superficial—not one of kind but merely of variety. The Perry factory girl is separated from the New York society girl, not by a few generations, but by a few years of culture and training. In America, where tradition and family play an unimportant part, the great educator is the spending of money. It is through the purchase of possessions that the Americans develop their taste, declare themselves, and show their inherent capacity for culture. Give to the Perry mill-hands a free chance for growth, transplant them, care for them, and they will readily show how slight and how merely a thing of culture the difference is between the wild rose and the American beauty.

What were my first impressions of the hands who returned at noon under the roof which had extended unquestioning its hospitality? Were they a band of slaves, victims to toil and deprivation? Were they making the pitiful exchange of their total vitality for insufficient nourishment? Did life mean to them merely the diminishing of their forces?

On the contrary, they entered gay, laughing young, a youth guarded intact by freedom and

hope. What were the subjects of conversation pursued at dinner? · Love, labour, the price paid for it, the advantages of town over country life, the neighbour and her conduct. What was the appearance of my companions? There was nothing in it to shock good taste. Their hands and feet were somewhat broadened by work, their skins were imperfect for the lack of proper food, their dresses were of coarse material; but in small things the differences were superficial only. Was it, then, in big things that the divergence began which places them as a lower class? Was it money alone that kept them from the places of authority? What were their ambitions, their perplexities? What part does self-respect play? How well satisfied are they, or how restless? What can we learn from them? What can we teach them?

We ate our dinner of boiled meat and custard pie and all started back in good time for a one o'clock beginning at the mill. For the space of several hundred feet its expressionless red brick walls lined the street, implacable, silent. Within all hummed to the collective activity of a throng, each working with all his force for a common end. Machines roared and pounded; a fine dust filled the air—a cloud of lint sent forth from the friction of thousands of busy hands in perpetual contact with the shapeless anonymous garments they were fashioning. There were, on their way between the cutting- and the

"THEY TRIFLE WITH LOVE"

finishing-rooms, 7,000 dozen shirts. They were to pass by innumerable hands; they were to be held and touched by innumerable individuals; they were to be begun and finished by innumerable human beings with distinct tastes and likings, abilities and failings; and when the 7,000 dozen shirts were complete they were to look alike, and they were to look as though made by a machine; they were to show no trace whatever of the men and the women who had made them. Here we were, 1,000 souls hurrying from morning until night, working from seven until six, with as little personality as we could, with the effort to produce, through an action purely mechanical, results as nearly as possible identical one to the other, and all to the machine itself.

What could be the result upon the mind and health of this frantic mechanical activity devoid of thought? It was this for which I sought an answer; it is for this I propose a remedy.

At the threshold of the mill door my roommate and I encountered Mr. Norse. There was irony in the fates allotted us. She was eager to make money; I was indifferent. Mr. Norse felt her in his power; I felt him in mine. She was given a job at twenty-five cents a day and all she could make; I was offered the favourite work in the mill—shirt finishing, at thirty cents a day and all I could make; and when I shook my head to see how far I could exploit my indifference and said, "Thirty cents is

too little," Mr. Norse's answer was: "Well, I suppose you, like the rest of us, are trying to earn a living. I will guarantee you seventy-five cents a day for the first two weeks, and all you can make over it is yours." My apprenticeship began under the guidance of an "old girl" who had been five years in the mill. A dozen at a time the woolen shirts were brought to us, complete all but the adding of the linen strips in front where the buttons and buttonholes are stitched. The price of this operation is paid for the dozen shirts five, five and a half and six cents, according to the complexity of the finish. My instructress had done as many as forty dozen in one day; she averaged $1.75 a day all the year around. While she was teaching me the factory paid her at the rate of ten cents an hour.

A touch of the machine's pedal set the needle to stitching like mad. A second touch in the opposite direction brought it to an abrupt standstill. For the five hours of my first afternoon session there was not an instant's harmony between what I did and what I intended to do. I sewed frantically into the middle of shirts. I watched my needle, impotent as it flew up and down, and when by chance I made a straight seam I brought it to so sudden a stop that the thread raveled back before my weary eyes. When my back and fingers ached so that I could no longer bend over the work, I watched my comrades with amazement. The machine was

not a wild animal in their hands, but an instrument that responded with niceness to their guidance. Above the incessant roar and burring din they called gaily to each other, gossiping, chatting, telling stories. What did they talk about? Everything, except domestic cares. The management of an interior, housekeeping, cooking were things I never once heard mentioned. What were the favourite topics, those returned to most frequently and with surest interest? Dress and men. Two girls in the seaming-room had got into a quarrel that day over a packer, a fine looking, broad-shouldered fellow who had touched the hearts of both and awakened in each an emotion she claimed the right to defend. The quarrel began lightly with an exchange of unpleasant comment; it soon took the proportions of a dispute which could not give itself the desired vent in words alone. The boss was called in. He made no attempt to control what lay beyond his power, but applying factory legislation to the case, he ordered the two Amazons to "register out" until the squabble was settled, as the factory did not propose to pay its hands for the time spent in fights. So the two girls "rang out" past the timekeeper and took an hour in the open air, hand to hand, fist to fist, which, as it happens to man, had its calming effect.

We stitched our way industriously over the 7,000 dozen. Except for the moments when some girl

called a message or shouted a conversation, there was nothing to occupy the mind but the vibrating, pulsing, pounding of the machinery. The body was shaken with it; the ears strained.

The little girl opposite me was a new hand. Her rosy cheeks and straight shoulders announced this fact. She had been five months in the mill; the other girls around her had been there two years, five years, nine years. There were 150 of us at the long, narrow tables which filled the room. By the windows the light and air were fairly good. At the centre tables the atmosphere was stagnant, the shadows came too soon. The wood's edge ran within a few yards of the factory windows. Between it and us lay the stream, the water force, the power that had called men to Perry. There, as everywhere in America, for an individual as for a place, the attraction was industrial possibilities. As Niagara has become more an industrial than a picturesque landscape, so Perry, in spite of its serene and beautiful surroundings, is a shrine to mechanical force in whose temple, the tall-chimneyed mill, a human sacrifice is made to the worshipers of gain.

My *vis-à-vis* was talkative. "Say," she said to her neighbour, "Jim Weston is the worst flirt I ever seen."

"Who's Jim Weston?" the other responded, diving into the box by her side for a handful of gray woolen shirts.

"Why, he's the one who made my teeth—he made teeth for all of us up home," and her smile reveals the handiwork of Weston.

"If I had false teeth," is the comment made upon this, "I wouldn't tell anybody."

"I thought some," continues the implacable new girl, unruffled, "of having a gold filling put in one of my front teeth. I think gold fillings are so pretty," she concludes, looking toward me for a response.

This primitive love of ornament I found manifest in the same medico-barbaric fancy for wearing eye-glasses. The nicety of certain operations in the mill, performed not always in the brightest of lights, is a fatal strain upon the eyes. There are no oculists in Perry, but a Buffalo member of the profession makes a monthly visit to treat a new harvest of patients. Their daily effort toward the monthly finishing of 40,000 garments permanently diminishes their powers of vision. Every thirty days a new set of girls appears with glasses. They wear them as they would an ornament of some kind, a necklace, bracelet or a hoop through the nose.

When the six o'clock whistle blew on the first night I had finished only two dozen shirts. "You've got a good job," my teacher said, as we came out together in the cool evening air. "You seem to be taking to it." They size a girl up the minute she comes in. If she has quick motions she'll get on all right. "I guess you'll make a good finisher."

Once more we assembled to eat and chat and relax. After a moment by the kitchen pump we took our places at table. Our hostess waited upon us. "It takes some grit," she explained, "and more grace to keep boarders." Except on Sundays, when all men might be considered equals in the sight of the Lord, she and her husband did not eat until we had finished. She passed the dishes of our frugal evening meal—potatoes, bread and butter and cake—and as we served ourselves she held her head in the opposite direction, as if to say, "I'm not looking; take the biggest piece."

It was with my roommates I became the soonest acquainted. The butcher's widow from Batavia was a grumbler. "How do you like your job?" I asked her as we fumbled about in the dim light of our low-roofed room.

"Oh, Lordy," was the answer, "I didn't think it would be like this. I'd rather do housework any day. I bet you won't stay two weeks." She was ugly and stupid. She had been married young to a butcher. Left alone to battle with the world, she might have shaken out some of her dullness, but the butcher for many years had stood between her and reality, casting a still deeper shadow on her ignorance. She had the monotony of an old child, one who questions constantly but who has passed the age when learning is possible. The butcher's death had opened new possibilities. After a period of respectful

mourning, she had set out, against the wishes of her family, with a vague, romantic hope that was expressed not so much in words as in a certain picture hat trimmed with violet chiffon and carried carefully in a bandbox by itself, a new, crisp sateen petticoat, and a golf skirt she had sat up until one o'clock to finish the night before she left home. It was inevitable that the butcher's widow should be disappointed. There was too much grim reality in ten-hour days spent over a machine in the stifling mill room to feed a sentimentalist whose thirty odd years were no accomplice to romance. She grumbled and complained. Secret dissatisfaction preyed upon her. She was somewhat exasperated at the rest of us, who worked cheerily and with no *arrière pensée*. At the end of the first week the picture hat was tucked away in the bandbox; the frou-frou of the sateen petticoat and the daring swish of the golf skirt were packed up, like the remains of a bubble that had reflected the world in its brilliant sides one moment and the next lay a little heap of soap-suds. She had gone behind in her work steadily at the factory; she was not making more than sixty cents a day. She left us and went back to do housework in Batavia.

My other roommate was of the Madonna type. In our class she would have been called an invalid. Her hands trembled, she was constantly in pain, and her nerves were rebellious without frequent doses of

bromide. We found her one night lying in a heap on the bed, her moans having called us to her aid. It was the pain in her back that never stopped, the ache between her shoulders, the din of the machines in her ears, the vibration, the strain of incessant hours upon her tired nerves. We fixed her up as best we could, and the next day at quarter before seven she was, like the rest of us, bending over her machine again. She had been a school-teacher, after passing the necessary examination at the Geneseo Normal School. She could not say why school-teaching was uncongenial to her, except that the children "made her nervous" and she wanted to try factory work. Her father was a cheese manufacturer up in the Genesee Valley. She might have lived quietly at home, but she disliked to be a dependent. She was of the mystic, sentimental type. She had a broad forehead, straight auburn hair, a clear-cut mouth, whose sharp curves gave it sweetness. Though her large frame indicated clearly an Anglo-Saxon lineage, there was nothing of the sport about her. She had never learned to skate or swim, but she could sit and watch the hills all day long. Her clothes had an esthetic touch. Mingled with her nervous determination there was a sentimental yearning. She was an idealist, impelled by some controlling emotion which was the mainspring of her life.

Little by little we became friends. Our common

weariness brought us often together after supper in a listless, confidential mood before the parlour stove. We let the conversation drift inevitably toward the strong current that was marking her with a touch of melancholy, like all those of her type whose emotional natures are an enchanted mirror, reflecting visions that have no place in reality. We talked about blondes and brunettes, tall men and short men, our favourite man's name; and gradually the impersonal became personal, the ideal took form. Her voice, like a broken lute that might have given sweet sounds, related the story. It was inevitable that she should love a dreamer like herself. Nature had imbued her with a hopeless yearning. She slipped a gold locket from a chain on her throat. It framed her hero's picture, the source of her courage, the embodiment of her heroic energy: a man of thirty, who had failed at everything; good-looking, refined, a personage in real life who resembled the inhabitants of her enchanted mirror. In the story she told there were stars and twilight, summer evenings, walks, talks, hopes and vague projects. Any practical questions I felt ready to ask would have sounded coarse. The little school-teacher with shattered nerves embodied a hope that was more to her than meat and drink and money. She was of those who do not live by bread alone.

Among the working population of Perry there are all manner of American characteristics manifest.

In a country where conditions change with such rapidity that each generation is a revelation to the one which preceded it, it is inevitable that the family and the State should be secondary to the individual. We live with our own generation, with our contemporaries. We substitute experience for tradition. Each generation lives for itself during its prime. As soon as its powers begin to decline it makes way with resignation for the next: "We have had our day; now you can have yours." Thus in the important decisions of life, the choosing of a career, matrimony or the like, the average American is much more influenced by his contemporaries than by his elders, much more stimulated or determined by the friends of his own age than by the older members of his family. This detaching of generations through the evolution of conditions is inevitable in a new civilization; it is part of the country's freedom. It adds fervour and zest and originality to the effort of each. But it means a youth without the peace of protection; an old age without the harvest of consolation. The man in such a battle as life becomes under these circumstances is better equipped than the woman, whose nature disarms her for the struggle. The American woman is restless, dissatisfied. Society, whether among the highest or lowest classes, has driven her toward a destiny that is not normal. The factories are full of old maids ; the colleges are full of old maids; the ballrooms in the worldly

centres are full of old maids. For natural obligations are substituted the fictitious duties of clubs, meetings, committees, organizations, professions, a thousand unwomanly occupations.

I cannot attempt to touch here upon the classes who have not a direct bearing on our subject, but the analogy is striking between them and the factory elements of which I wish to speak. I cannot dwell upon details that, while full of interest, are yet somewhat aside from the present point, but I want to state a fact, the origin of whose ugly consequences is in all classes and therefore concerns every living American woman. Among the American born women of this country the sterility is greater, the fecundity less than those of any other nation in the world, unless it be France, whose anxiety regarding her depopulation we would share in full measure were it not for the foreign immigration to the United States, which counteracts the degeneracy of the American.* The original causes for this increasing sterility are moral and not physical. When this is known, does not the philosophy of the American working woman become a subject of vital interest? Among the enemies to fecundity and a natural destiny there are two which act as potently in the lower as in the upper classes: the triumph of individualism, the love of luxury. America

* George Engelman, M. D., "The Increasing Sterility of American Women," from the Journal of the American Medical Association, October 5, 1901.

is not a democracy, the unity of effort between the man and the woman does not exist. Men were too long in a majority. Women have become autocrats or rivals. A phrase which I heard often repeated at the factory speaks by itself for a condition: "She must be married, because she don't work." And another phrase pronounced repeatedly by the younger girls: "I don't have to work; my father gives me all the money I need, but not all the money I *want*. I like to be independent and spend my money as I please."

What are the conclusions to be drawn? The American-born girl is an egoist. Her whole effort (and she makes and sustains one in the life of mill drudgery) is for herself. She works for luxury until the day when a proper husband presents himself. Then she stops working and lets him toil for both, with the hope that the budget shall not be diminished by increasing family demands.

In those cases where the woman continues to work after marriage, she chooses invariably a kind of occupation which is inconsistent with child-bearing. She returns to the mill with her husband. There were a number of married couples at the knitting factory at Perry. They boarded, like the rest of us. I never saw a baby nor heard of a baby while I was in the town.

I can think of no better way to present this love of luxury, this triumph of individualism, this passion

for independence than to continue my account of the daily life at Perry.

On Saturday night we drew our pay and got out at half-past four. This extra hour and a half was not given to us; we had saved it up by beginning each day at fifteen minutes before seven. In reality we worked ten and a quarter hours five days in the week in order to work eight and a half on the sixth.

By five o'clock on Saturdays the village street was animated with shoppers—the stores were crowded. At supper each girl had a collection of purchases to show: stockings, lace, fancy buckles, velvet ribbons, elaborate hairpins. Many of them, when their board was paid, had less than a dollar left of the five or six it had taken them a week to earn.

"I am not working to save," was the claim of one girl for all. "I'm working for pleasure."

This same girl called me into her room one evening when she was packing to move to another boarding-house where were more young men and better food. I watched her as she put her things into the trunk. She had a quantity of dresses, underclothes with lace and tucks, ribbons, fancy hair ornaments, lace boleros, handkerchiefs. The bottom of her trunk was full of letters from her beau. The mail was always the source of great excitement for her, and having noticed that she seemed especially hilarious over a letter received that night, I made this the pretext for a confidence.

"You got a letter to-night, didn't you?" I asked innocently. "Was it the one you wanted?"

"My, yes," she answered, tossing up a heap of missives from the depths of her trunk. "It was from the same one that wrote me these. I've been going with him three years. I met him up in the grape country where I went to pick grapes. They give you your board and you can make twenty-seven or thirty dollars in a fall. He made up his mind as soon as he saw me that I was about right. Now he wants me to marry him. That's what his letter said to-night. He is making three dollars a day and he owns a farm and a horse and wagon. He bought his sister a $300 piano this fall."

"Well, of course," I said eagerly, "you will accept him?"

She looked half shy, half pleased, half surprised.

"No, my! no," she answered, shaking her head. "I don't want to be married."

"But why not? Don't you think you are foolish? It's a good chance and you have already been 'going with him' three years."

"Yes, I know that, but I ain't ready to marry him yet. Twenty-five is time enough. I'm only twenty-three. I can have a good time just as I am. He didn't want me to come away and neither did my parents. I thought it would 'most kill my father. He looked like he'd been sick the day I left, but he

AFTER SATURDAY NIGHT'S SHOPPING

let me come 'cause he knew I'd never be satisfied until I got my independence."

What part did the love of humanity play in this young egoist's heart? She was living, as she had so well explained it, "not to save, but to give herself pleasure"; not to spare others, but to exercise her will in spite of them. Tenderness, reverence, gratitude, protection are the feelings which one generation awakens for another. Among the thousand contemporaries at Perry, from the sameness of their ambitions, there was inevitable rivalry and selfishness. The closer the age and capacity the keener the struggle.

There are seven churches in Perry of seven different denominations. In this small town of 3,000 inhabitants there are seven different forms of worship. The church plays an important part in the social life of the mill hands. There are gatherings of all sorts from one Sunday to another, and on Sunday there are almost continuous services. There are frequent conversions. When the Presbyterian form fails they "try" the Baptist. There is no moral instruction; it is all purely religious; and they join one church or another more as they would a social club than an ordained religious organization.

Friday was "social" night at the church. Sometimes there was a "poverty" social, when every one put on shabby clothes, and any one who wore a

correct garment of any sort was fined for the benefit of the church. Pound socials were another variety of diversion, where all the attendants were weighed on arriving and charged a cent admission for every pound of avoirdupois.

The most popular socials, however, were box socials, and it was to one of these I decided to go with two girls boarding in the house. Each of us packed a box with lunch as good as we could afford —eggs, sandwiches, cakes, pickles, oranges—and arrived with these, we proceeded to the vestry-room, where we found an improvised auctioneer's table and a pile of boxes like our own, which were marked and presently put up for sale. The youths of the party bid cautiously or recklessly, according as their inward conviction told them that the box was packed by friend or foe.

My box, which, like the rest, had supper for two, was bid in by a tall, nice-looking mill hand, and we installed ourselves in a corner to eat and talk. He was full of reminiscence and had had a checkered career. His first experience had been at night work in a paper mill. He worked eleven hours a night one week, thirteen hours a night the next week, in and out of doors, drenched to the skin. He had lost twenty-five pounds in less than a year, and his face was a mere mask drawn over the irregular bones of the skull.

"I always like whatever I am doing," he responded

at my protestation of sympathy. "I think that's the only way to be. I never had much appetite at night. They packed me an elegant pail, but somehow all cold food didn't relish much. I never did like a pail. . . . How would you like to take a dead man's place?" he asked, looking at me grimly.

I begged him to explain.

"One of my best friends," he began, "was working alongside of me, and I guess he got dizzy or something, for he leaned up against the big belt that ran all the machinery and he was lifted right up in the air and tore to pieces before he ever knew what struck him. The boss came in and seen it, and the second question he asked, he says, 'Say, is the machinery running all right?' It wasn't ten minutes before there was another man in there doing the dead man's work."

I began to undo the lunch-box, feeling very little inclined to eat. We divided the contents, and my friend, seeing perhaps that I was depressed, told me about the "shows" he had been to in his wanderings.

"Now, I don't care as much for comedy as some folks," he explained. "I like 'Puddin' Head Wilson' first rate, but the finest thing I ever seen was two of Shakespeare's: 'The Merchant of Venice' and 'Julius Cæsar.' If you ever get a chance I advise you to go and hear them; they're great."

I responded cordially, and when we had exhausted

Shakespeare I asked him how he liked Perry people.

"Oh, first rate," he said. "I've been here only a month, but I think there's too much formality. It seems to me that when you work alongside of a girl day after day you might speak to her without an introduction, but they won't let you here. I never seen such a formal place."

I said very little. The boy talked on of his life and experiences. His English was good except for certain grammatical errors. His words were well chosen. There was between him and the fortunate boys of a superior class only a few years of training.

The box social was the beginning of a round of gaieties. The following night I went with my box-social friend to a ball. Neither of us danced, but we arrived early and took good places for looking on. The barren hall was dimly lighted. In the corner there was a stove; at one end a stage. An old man with a chin beard was scattering sand over the floor with a springtime gesture of seed sowing. He had his hat on and his coat collar turned up, as though to indicate that the party had not begun. By and by the stage curtain rolled up and the musicians came out and unpacked a violin, a trombone, a flute and a drum. They sat down in the Medieval street painted on the scenery back of them, crossed their legs and asked for *sol la* from an esthetic young

lady pianist, with whom they seemed on very familiar terms. The old man with the chin beard made an official *entrée* from the wing, picked up the drum and became a part of the orchestra. The subscribers had begun to arrive, and when the first two-step struck up there were eight or ten couples on the floor. They held on to each other closely, with no outstretched arms as is the usual form, and they revolved very slowly around and around the room. The young men had smooth faces, patent leather boots, very smart cravats and a sheepish, self-conscious look. The girls had elaborate constructions in frizzed hair, with bows and tulle; black trailing skirts with coloured ruffled under-petticoats, light-coloured blouses and fancy belts. They seemed to be having a very good time.

On the way home we passed a brightly lighted grocery shop. My friend looked in with interest. "Goodness," he said, "but those Saratoga chips look good. Now, what would you order," he went on, "if you could have anything you liked?" We began to compose a ménu with oysters and chicken and all the things we never saw, but it was not long before my friend cried "Mercy! Oh, stop; I can't stand it. It makes me too hungry."

The moon had gone under a cloud. The wooden sidewalks were rough and irregular, and as we walked along toward home I tripped once or twice. Presently I felt a strong arm put through mine,

with this assurance: "Now if you fall we'll both fall together."

After four or five days' experience with a machine I began to work with more ease and with less pain between my shoulders. The girls were kind and sympathetic, stopping to help and encourage the "new girl." One of the shirt finishers, who had not been long in the mill herself, came across from her table one day when I was hard at work with a pain like a sword stab in my back.

"I know how you ache," she said. "It just makes me feel like crying when I see how you keep at it and I can guess how tired you are."

Nothing was so fatiguing as the noise. In certain places near the eyelet and buttonhole machines it was impossible to make one's neighbour hear without shouting. My teacher, whose nerves, I took it, were less sensitive than mine, expressed her sensations in this way:

"It's just terrible sitting here all day alone, worrying and thinking all by yourself and hustling from morning until night. Lots of the girls have nervous prostration. My sister had it and I guess I'm getting it. I hear the noise all night. Quite a few have consumption, too, from the dust and the lint."

The butcher's widow, the school-teacher and I started in at about the same time. At the end of two weeks the butcher's widow had long been gone. The school-teacher had averaged seventy-nine cents

a day and I had averaged eighty-nine. My best day I finished sixteen dozen shirts and netted $1.11. My board and washing cost me three dollars, so that from the first I had a living insured.

There was one negress in the factory. She worked in a corner quite by herself and attended to menial jobs, such as sweeping and picking up scraps. A great many of the girls and boys took correspondence courses in stenography, drawing, bookkeeping, illustrating, etc., etc. The purely mechanical work of the mill does not satisfy them. They are restless and ambitious, exactly the material with which to form schools of industrial art, the class of hand-workers of whom I have already spoken.

One of the girls who worked beside us as usual in the morning, left a note on her machine at noon one day to say that she would never be back. She was going up to the lake to drown herself, and we needn't look for her. Some one was sent in search. She was found sitting at the lake's edge, weeping. She did not speak. We all talked about it in our leisure moments, but the work was not interrupted. There were various explanations: she was out of her mind; she was discouraged with her work; she was nervous. No one suggested that an unfortunate love affair be the cause of her desperate act. There was not a word breathed against her reputation. I would have felt impure in proposing what to me seemed most probable.

The mill owners exert, as far as possible, an influence over the moral tone of their employees, assuming the right to judge their conduct both in and out of the factory and to treat them as they see fit. The average girls are self-respecting. They trifle with love. The attraction they wish to exert is ever present in their minds and in their conversation. The sacrifices they make for clothes are the first in importance. They have superstitions of all kinds: to sneeze on Saturday means the arrival of a beau on Sunday; a big or little tea leaf means a tall or a short caller, and so on. There is a book of dreams kept on one table in the mill, and the girls consult it to find the interpretation of their nocturnal reveries. They are fanciful, sentimental, cold, passionless. The accepted honesty of married life makes them slow to discard the liberty they love, to dismiss the suitors who would attend their wedding as one would a funeral.

There is, of course, another category of girl, who goes brutally into passionate pleasures, follows the shows, drinks and knocks about town with the boys. She is known as a "bum," has sacrificed name and reputation and cannot remain in the mill.

We discussed one night the suitable age for a girl to become mistress of herself. The boy of the household maintained that at eighteen a girl could marry, but that she must be twenty-one before she could have her own way. All the girls insisted that they

could and did boss themselves and had even before they were eighteen.

Two chums who boarded in my house gave a charming illustration of the carelessness and the extravagance, the independence and love of it which characterizes feminine America. One of these was a *deracinee*, a child with a foreign touch in her twang; a legend of other climes in the dexterity of her deft fingers; some memory of an exile from France in her name: Lorraine. Her friend was a *mondaine*. She had the social gift, a subtle understanding of things worldly, the *glissey mortel n'appuyez jamais* attitude toward life. By a touch of flippancy, an adroit turn of mind, she kept the knowing mastery over people which has mystified and delighted in all great hostesses since the days of Esther.

When the other girls waited feverishly for love letters, she was opening a pile of invitations to socials and theatre parties. Discreet and condescending, she received more than she gave.

As soon as the posters were out for a Tuesday performance of "Faust," preparations began in the household to attend. Saturday shopping and supper were hurried through and by six o'clock Lorraine was at the sewing machine tucking chiffon for hats and bodices. After ten hours' work in the mill, she began again, eager to use the last of the spring twilight, prolonged by a quarter moon.

There was a sudden, belated gust of snow; in the blue mist each white frame house glowed with a warm, pink light from its parlour stove. Lorraine's fingers flew. A hat took form and grew from a heap of stuff into a Parisian creation; a bolero was cut and tucked and fitted; a skirt was ripped and stitched and pressed; a shirt-waist was started and finished. For two nights the girls worked until twelve o'clock so that when the "show" came they might have something new to wear that nobody had seen. This must have been the unanimous intention of the Perry populace, for the peanut gallery was a bower of fashion. Styles, which I had thought were new in Paris, were familiarly worn in Perry by the mill hands. White kid gloves were *en regle*. The play was "Faust." All allusions to the triumph of religion over the devil; all insinuations on the part of Mephistopheles in regard to the enviable escape of Martha's husband and of husbands in general, from prating women in general; all invocations of virtue and moral triumph, were greeted with bursts of applause. Between the acts there was music, and the ushers distributed showers of printed advertisements, which the audience fell at once to reading as though they had nothing to talk about.

I heard only one hearty comment about the play: "That devil," said Lorraine, as we walked home together, "was a corker!"

I have left until the last the two friends who held

a place apart in the household: the farmer and his wife, the old people of another generation with whom we boarded. They had begun life together forty years ago. They lived on neighbouring farms. There was dissension between the families such as we read of in "Pyramus and Thisbe," "Romeo and Juliet." The young people contrived a means of corresponding. An old coat that hung in the barn, where nobody saw it, served as post-office. Truman pleaded his cause ardently and won his Louisa. They fixed a day for the elopement. A fierce snow-storm piled high its drifts of white, but all the afternoon long the little bride played about, burrowing a path from the garden to her bedroom window, and when night came and brought her mounted hero with it, she climbed up on to the saddle by his side and rode away to happiness, leaving ill nature and quarrels far behind. Side by side, as on the night of their wedding ride, they had traversed forty years together. Ill health had broken up their farm home. When Truman could no longer work they came in to Perry to take boarders, having no children. The old man never spoke. He did chores about the house, made the fire mornings, attended to the parlour stove; he went about his work and no one ever addressed a word to him; he seemed to have no more live contact with the youth about him than driftwood has with the tree's new shoots. He had lived his life on a farm; he was a land captain;

he knew the earth's secrets as a ship's captain knows the sea's. He paced the mild wooden pavements of Perry, booted and capped for storm and wind, deep snow and all the inimical elements a pioneer might meet with. His new false teeth seemed to shine from his shaggy gray beard as a symbol of this new town experience in a rough natural existence, out of keeping, ill assorted. Tempted to know what his silence hid, I spent an hour with him by the kitchen stove one Sunday afternoon. His memory went easily back to the days when there were no railroads, no telegraphs, no mills. He was of a speculative turn of mind:

"I don't see," he said, "what makes men so crazy after gold. They're getting worse all the time. Gold ain't got no real value. You take all the gold out of the world and it wouldn't make no difference whatever. You can't even make a tool to get a living with, out of gold; but just do away with the iron, and where would you be?" And again, he volunteered:

"I think Mr. Carnegie would have done a deal nobler if he had paid his men a little more straight along. He wouldn't have had such a name for himself. But don't you believe it would have been better to have paid those men more for the work they were doing day by day than it is now to give pensions to their families? I know what I think about the matter."

I asked him how he liked city life.

SUNDAY EVENING AT SILVER LAKE

The mill girls' excursion resort. A special train and 'busses run on Sundays, and "everybody" goes.

"Give me a farm every time," was his answer. "Once you've seen a town you know it all. It's the same over and over again. But the country's changing every day in the year. It's a terrible thing, being sick," he went on. "It seems sometimes as though the pain would tear me to pieces when I walk across the floor. I wasn't no good on the farm any more, so my wife took a notion we better come in town and take boarders."

Thus it was with this happily balanced couple; as his side grew heavier she took on more ballast and swung even with him. She had the quick adaptability common to American women. During the years of farm life religious meetings and a few neighbours had kept her in touch with the outside world. The church and the kitchen were what she had on the farm; the church and the kitchen were what she had in town; family life supplemented by boarders, a social existence kept alive by a few faithful neighbours. She had retained her activity and sympathy because she was intelligent, because she lived with the *young*. The man could not make himself one of another generation, so he lived alone. He had lost his companions, the "cow kind and the sheep kind"; he had lost control over the earth that belonged to him; he was disused; he suffered; he pined. But as they sat together side by side at table, his look toward her was one of trust and comfort. His glance traveled back over a long

vista of years seen to them as their eyes met, invisible to those about—years that had glorified confidence in this life as it passed and transfigured it into the promise of another life to come.

MAKING CLOTHING IN CHICAGO

CHAPTER IV

Making Clothing in Chicago

On arriving in Chicago I addressed myself to the ladies of Hull House, asking for a tenement family who would take a factory girl to board. I intended starting out without money to see at least how far I could go before putting my hand into the depths where an emergency fund was pinned in a black silk bag.

It was the first day of May. A hot wind blew eddies of dust up and down the electric car tracks; the streets were alive with children; a group swarmed in front of each doorstep, too large to fit into the house behind it. Down the long, regular avenues that stretched right and left there was a broken line of tenements topped by telegraph wires and bathed in a soft cloud of black soot falling from a chimney in the neighbourhood. The sidewalks were a patchwork of dirt, broken paving-stones and wooden boards. The sunshine was hot and gloomy. There were no names on the corner lamps and the house numbers were dull and needed repainting. It was already late in the afternoon: I had but an hour or two before dark to find a lodging. The

miserable, overcrowded tenement houses repelled me, yet I dreaded that there should not be room among them for one more bread-winner to lodge. I hailed a cluster of children in the gutter:

"Say," I said, "do you know where Mrs. Hicks lives to?"

They crowded around, eager. The tallest boy, with curly red hair and freckles, pointed out Mrs. Hicks' residence, the upper windows of a brick flat that faced the world like a prison wall. After I had rung and waited for the responding click from above, a cross-eyed Italian woman with a baby in her arms motioned to me from the step where she was sitting that I must go down a side alley to find Mrs. Hicks. Out of a promiscuous heap of filth, a broken-down staircase led upward to a row of green blinds and a screen door. Somebody's housekeeping was scattered around in torn bits of linen and tomato cans.

The screen door opened to my knock and the Hicks family gushed at me—ever so many children of all ages and an immense mother in an underwaist and petticoat. The interior was neat; the wooden floors were scrubbed spotless. I congratulated myself. Mrs. Hicks clucked to the family group, smiled at me, and said:

"I never took a boarder in my life. I ain't got room enough for my own young ones, let alone strangers."

"THE BREATH OF THE BLACK, SWEET NIGHT REACHED THEM, FETID, HEAVY WITH THE ODOUR OF DEATH AS IT BLEW ACROSS THE STOCKYARDS"

There were two more names on my list. I proceeded to the nearest and found an Irish lady living in basement rooms ornamented with green crochet work, crayon portraits, red plaid table-cloths and chromo picture cards.

She had rheumatism in her "limbs" and moved with difficulty. She was glad to talk the matter over, though she had from the first no intention of taking me. From my then point of view nothing seemed so desirable as a cot in Mrs. Flannagan's front parlour. I even offered in my eagerness to sleep on the horsehair sofa. Womanlike, she gave twenty little reasons for not taking me before she gave the one big reason, which was this:

"Well, to tell you the truth, I wouldn't mind having you myself, but I've got three sons, and you know *boys is queer*."

It was late, the sun had set and only the twilight remained for my search before night would be upon me and I would be driven to some charity refuge.

I had one more name, and climbed to find its owner in a tenement flat. She was a German woman with a clubfoot. Two half-naked children incrusted with dirt were playing on the floor. They waddled toward me as I asked what my chances were for finding a room and board. The mother struck first one, then the other, of her offspring, and they fell into two little heaps, both wailing. From a hole back of the kitchen came the sympathetic response

of a half-starved shaggy dog. He howled and the babes wailed while we visited the dusky apartment. There was one room rented to a day lodger who worked nights, and one room without a window where the German family slept. She proposed that I share the bed with her that night until she could get an extra cot. Her husband and the children could sleep on the parlour lounge. She was hideous and dirty. Her loose lips and half-toothless mouth were the slipshod note of an entire existence. There was a very dressy bonnet with feathers hanging on a peg in the bedroom, and two gala costumes belonging to the tearful twins.

"I'll come back in an hour, thank you," I said. "Don't expect me if I am not here in an hour," and I fled down the stairs. Before the hour was up I had found, through the guidance of the Irish lady with rheumatism, a clean room in one street and board in another. This was inconvenient, but safe and comparatively healthy.

My meals were thirty-five cents a day, payable at the end of the week; my room was $1.25 a week, total $3.70 a week.

My first introduction to Chicago tenement life was supper at Mrs. Wood's.

I could hear the meal sputtering on the kitchen stove as I opened the Wood front door.

Mrs. Wood, combining duties as cook and hostess, called to me to make myself at home in the front

parlour. I seated myself on the sofa, which exuded the familiar acrid odour of the poor. Opposite me there was a door half open leading into a room where a lamp was lighted. I could see a young girl and a man talking together. He was sitting and had his hat on. She had a halo of blond hair, through which the lamplight was shining, and she stood near the man, who seemed to be teasing her. Their conversation was low, but there was a familiar cry now and then, half vulgar, half affectionate.

When we had taken our places at the table, Mrs. Wood presented us.

"This is Miss Ida," she said, pointing to the blonde girl; "she's been boarding over a year with me, and this," turning to the young man who sat near by with one arm hanging listlessly over the back of a chair, "this is Miss Ida's intended."

The other members of the household were a fox terrier, a canary and "Wood"—Wood was a man over sixty. He and Mrs. Wood had the same devoted understanding that I have observed so often among the poor couples of the older generation. This good little woman occupied herself with the things that no longer satisfy. She took tender care of her husband, following him to the door with one hand on his shoulder and calling after him as he went on his way: "Good-by; take care of yourself." She had a few pets, her children were married and gone, she had a miniature patch of garden,

a trust in the church guild—which took some time and attention for charitable works, and she did her own cooking and housework. "And," she explained to me in the course of our conversation at supper, "I never felt the need of joining these University Settlement Clubs to get into society." Wood and his wife were a good sort. Miss Ida was kind in her inquiries about my plans.

"Have you ever operated a power machine?" she asked.

"Yes," I responded—with what pride she little dreamed. "I've run an electric Singer."

"I guess I can get you a job, then, all right, at my place. It's piece-work; you get off at five, but you can make good money."

I thanked her, not adding that my Chicago career was to be a checkered one, and that I was determined to see how many things I could do that I had never done before.

But social life was beginning to wear on Miss Ida's intended. He took up his hat and swung along toward the door. I was struggling to extract with my fork the bones of a hard, fried fish. Mrs. Wood encouraged me in a motherly tone:

"Oh, my, don't be so formal; take your knife."

"Say," called a voice from the door, "say, come on, Ida, I'm waiting for you." And the blonde fiancée hurried away with an embarrassed laugh to join her lover. She was refined and delicate, her ears were

small, her hands white and slender, she spoke correctly with a nasal voice, and her teeth (as is not often the case among this class, whose lownesses seem suddenly revealed when they open their mouths) were sound and clean.

The man's smooth face was all commonness and vulgarity.

"He's had appendicitis," Mrs. Wood explained when we were alone. "He's been out of work a long time. As soon as he goes to his job his side bursts out again where they operated on him. He ain't a bit strong."

"When are they going to be married?" I asked.

"Oh, dear me, they don't think of that yet; they're in no hurry."

"Will Miss Ida work after she's married?"

"No, indeed."

Did they not have their share of ideal then, these two young labourers who could wait indefinitely, fed by hope, in their sordid, miserable surroundings?

I returned to my tenement room; its one window opened over a narrow alley flanked on its opposite side by a second tenement, through whose shutters I could look and see repeated layers of squalid lodgings. The thermometer had climbed up into the eighties. The wail of a newly born baby came from the room under mine. The heat was stifling. Outdoors in the false, flickering day of the arc lights the crowd swarmed, on the curb, on the sidewalk, on

the house steps. The breath of the black, sweet night reached them, fetid, heavy with the odour of death as it blew across the stockyards. Shouts, calls, cries, moans, the sounds of old age and of infancy, of despair and of joy, mingled and became the anonymous murmur of a hot, human multitude.

The following morning I put ten cents in my pocket and started out to get a job before this sum should be used up. How huge the city seemed when I thought of the small space I could cover on foot, looking for work! I walked toward the river, as the commercial activity expressed itself in that direction by fifteen- and twenty-story buildings and streams of velvet smoke. Blocks and blocks of tenements, with the same dirty people wallowing around them, answered my searching eyes in blank response. There was an occasional dingy sign offering board and lodging. After I had made several futile inquiries at imposing offices on the river front I felt that it was a hopeless quest. I should never get work unknown, unskilled, already tired and discouraged. My collar was wilted in the fierce heat; my shabby felt sailor hat was no protection against the sun's rays; my hands were gloveless; and as I passed the plate glass windows I could see the despondent droop of my skirt, the stray locks of hair that blew about free of comb or veil. A sign out: "Manglers wanted!" attracted my attention in the window of a large steam laundry. I was not a

"mangler," but I went in and asked to see the boss. "Ever done any mangling?" was his first question.

"No," I answered, "but I am sure I could learn." I put so much ardour into my response that the boss at once took an interest.

"We might give you a place as shaker; you could start in and work up."

"What do you pay?'

"Four dollars a week until you learn. Then you would work up to five, five and a half."

'Better than nothing, was all I could think, but I can't live on four a week.

"How often do you pay?"

"Every Tuesday night."

This meant no money for ten days.

"If you think you'd like to try shaking come round Monday morning at seven o'clock."

Which I took as my dismissal until Monday.

At least I had a job, however poor, and strengthened by this thought I determined to find something better before Monday. The ten-cent piece lay an inviting fortune in my hand. I was to part with one-tenth of it in exchange for a morning newspaper. This investment seemed a reckless plunge, but "nothing venture, nothing have," my pioneer spirit prompted, and soon deep in the list of *Wanted, Females*, I felt repaid. Even in my destitute condition I had a choice in mind. If possible I wanted to work without machinery in a shop where

the girls used their hands alone as power. Here seemed to be my heart's content—a short, concise advertisement, "Wanted, hand sewers." After a consultation with a policeman as to the whereabouts of my future employer, it became evident that I must part with another of my ten cents, as the hand sewers worked on the opposite side of the city from the neighbourhood whither I had strayed in my morning's wanderings. I took a car and alighted at a busy street in the fashionable shopping centre of Chicago. The number I looked for was over a steep flight of dirty wooden stairs. If there is such a thing as luck it was now to dwell a moment with one of the poorest. I pushed open a swinging door and let myself into the office of a clothing manufacturer.

The owner, Mr. F., got up from his desk and came toward me.

"I seen your advertisement in the morning paper."

"Yes," he answered in a kindly voice. "Are you a tailoress?"

"No, sir; I've never done much sewing except on a machine."

"Well, we have machines here."

"But," I almost interrupted, beginning to fear that my training at Perry was to limit all further experience to an electric Singer, "I'd rather work with my hands. I like the hand-work."

He looked at me and gave me an answer which

exactly coincided with my theories. He said this, and it was just what I wanted him to say.

"If you do hand-work you'll have to use your mind. Lots of girls come in here with an idea they can let their thoughts wander; but you've got to pay strict attention. You can't do hand-work mechanically."

"All right, sir," I responded. "What do you pay?"

"I'll give you six dollars a week while you're learning." I could hardly control a movement of delight. Six dollars a week! A dollar a day for an apprentice!

"But"—my next question I made as dismal as possible—"when do you pay?"

"Generally not till the end of the second week," the kindly voice said; "but we could arrange to pay you at the end of the first if you needed the money."

"Shall I come in Monday?"

"Come in this afternoon at 12:30 if you're ready."

"I'm ready," I said, "but I ain't brought no lunch with me, and it's too late now to get home and back again."

The man put his hand in his pocket and laid down before me a fifty-cent piece, advanced on my pay.

"Take that," he said, with courtesy; "get yourself a lunch in the neighbourhood and come back at half-past twelve."

I went to the nearest restaurant. It was an immense bakery patronized by office girls and men,

hard workers who came for their only free moment of the day into this eating-place. Everything that could be swallowed quickly was spread out on a long counter, behind which there were steaming tanks of tea, coffee and chocolate. The men took their food downstairs and the ladies climbed to the floor above. I watched them. They were self-supporting women—independent; they could use their money as they liked. They came in groups—a rustling frou-frou announced silk underfittings; feathers, garlands of flowers, masses of trimming weighed down their broad-brimmed picture hats, fancy veils, kid gloves, silver side-bags, embroidered blouses and elaborate belt buckles completed the detail of their showy costumes, the whole worn with the air of a manikin. What did these busy women order for lunch? Tea and buns, ice-cream and buckwheat cakes, apple pie *a la mode* and chocolate were the most serious ménus. This nourishing food they ate with great nicety and daintiness, talking the while about clothes. They were in a hurry, as all of them had some shopping to do before returning to work, and they each spent a prinking five minutes before the mirror, adjusting the trash with which they had bedecked themselves exteriorly while their poor hard-working systems went ungarnished and hungry within.

This is the wound in American society whereby its strength sloughs away. It is in this class that

campaigns can be made, directly and indirectly, by preaching and by example. What sort of women are those who sacrifice all on the altar of luxury? It is a prostitution to sell the body's health and strength for gewgaws. What harmony can there be between the elaborate get-up of these young women and the miserable homes where they live? The idolizing of material things is a religion nurtured by this class of whom I speak. In their humble surroundings the love of self, the desire to possess things, the cherished need for luxuries, crowd out the feelings that make character. They are but one manifestation of the egoism of the unmarried American woman.

For what and for whom do they work?

Is their fundamental thought to be of benefit to a family or to some member of a family? Is their indirect object to be strong, thrifty members of society? No. Their parents are secondary, their health is secondary to the consuming vanity that drives them toward a ruinous goal. They scorn the hand-workers; they feel themselves a *noblesse* by comparison. They are the American snobs whose coat of arms marks not a well-remembered family but prospective luxuries. . . . Married, they bring as a portion thriftless tastes, to satisfy which more than one business man has wrecked his career. They work like men; why should they not live as men do, with similar responsibilities? What should

we think of a class of masculine clerks and employees who spent all their money on clothes?

The boss was busy when I got back to the clothing establishment. From the bench where I waited for orders I could take an inventory of the shop's productions. Arrayed in rows behind glass cases there were all manner of uniforms: serious uniforms going to the colonies to be shot to pieces, militia uniforms that would hear their loudest heart-beats under a fair head; drum-majors' hats that would never get farther than the peaceful lawn of a military post; fireman's hats; the dark-blue coat of a lonely lighthouse guardian; the undignified short jacket of a "buttons." All that meant parade and glory, the uniforms that make men identical by making each proud of himself for his brass buttons and gold lace. Even in the heavy atmosphere of the shop's rear, though they appeared somewhat dingy and tarnished, they had their undeniable charm, and I thought with pity of the hands that had to sew on plain serge suits.

As soon as the boss saw me, the generous Mr. F. who advanced me the fifty cents smiled at the skeptical Mr. F. who had never expected to see me again. One self said to the other: "I told you so!" and all the kindly lines in the man's face showed that he had looked for the best even in his inferiors and that he had found mankind worth trusting. He was the most generous employer I met with

IN A CHICAGO THEATRICAL COSTUME FACTORY

anywhere; I also took him to be the least business-like. But, as though quickly to establish the law of averages, his head forewoman counterbalanced all his mercies by her ferocious crossness. She terrorized everybody, even Mr. F. It was to her, I concluded, that we owed our $6 a week. No girl would stay for less; it was an atelier chiefly of foreign employees; the proud American spirit would not stand the lash of Frances' tongue. She had been ten years in the place whose mad confusion was order to her. Mr. F. did not dare to send her away; he preferred keeping a perpetual advertisement in the papers and changing hands every few days.

The workroom on our floor was fifty or sixty feet long, with windows on the street at one end and on a court at the other. The middle of the room was lighted by gas. The air was foul and the dirt lay in heaps at every corner and was piled up under the centre tables. It was less like a workshop than an old attic. There was the long-accumulated disorder of hasty preparation for the vanities of life. It had not at all the aspect of a factory which makes a steady provision of practical things. There were odds and ends of fancy costumes hanging about—swords, crowns, belts and badges. Under the sewing machines' swift needles flew the scarlet coats of a regiment; gold and silver braid lay unfurled on the table; the hand-workers bent over an armful of khaki; a row of young girls were fitting military

caps to imaginary soldier's heads; the ensigns of glory slipped through the fingers of the humble; chevrons and epaulets were caressed never so closely by toil-worn hands. In the midst of us sits a man on a headless hobby horse, making small gray trunks bound in red leather, such boxes as might contain jewels for Marguerite, a game of lotto, or a collection of jack-straws and mother-of-pearl counters brought home from a first trip abroad. The trunk maker wears a sombrero and smokes a corn-cob pipe. He is very handsome with dark eyes and fine features, and he has the "average figure," so that he serves as manikin for the atelier; and I find him alternately a workman in overalls and a Turkish magnate with turban and flowing robes. It is into this atmosphere of toil and unreality that I am initiated as a hand sewer. Something of the dramatic and theatrical possesses the very managers themselves. Below, a regiment waits impatient for new brass buttons; we sew against time and break all our promises. Messengers arrive every few minutes with fresh reports of rising ire on the part of disappointed customers. Down the stairs pell-mell comes an elderly partner of the firm with a gold-and-purple crown on his head and after him follows the kindly Mr. F. in an usher's jacket. "If you don't start now," he calls, "that order'll be left on our hands."

Amid such confusion the regular rhythm of the

needle as it carries its train of thread across the yards of coloured cloth is peaceful, consoling. I have on one side of me a tailor who speaks only Polish, on the other side a seamstress who speaks only German. Across the frontier I thus become they communicate with signs, and I get my share of work planned out by each. Every woman in the place is cross except the girl next to me. She has only just come in and the poison of the forewoman has not yet stung her into ill nature. She is, like all the foreigners, neatly, soberly dressed in a sensible frock of good durable material. The few Americans in the shop have on elaborate shirt-waists in light-coloured silks with fancy ribbon collars. We are well paid, there is no doubt of it. We begin work at 8 A. M. and have a generous half-hour at noon. Most of the girls are Germans and Poles, and they have all received training as tailoresses in their native countries. To the sharp onslaught of Frances' tongue they make no response except in dogged silent obedience, whereas the dressy Americans with their proper spirit of independence touch the limit of insubordination at every new command. Insults are freely exchanged; threats ring out on the tired ears. Frances is ubiquitous. She scolds the tailors with a torrent of abuse, she terrorizes the handsome manikin, she bewilders the kindly Mr. F., and before three days have passed she has dismissed the neat little Polish girl, in tears. This latter comes to me, her face

wrought with emotion. She was receiving n ne dollars a week; it is her first place in America. This sudden dismissal, its injustice, requires an explanation. She cannot speak a word of English and asks me to put my poor German at her service as interpreter.

Mr. F. is clearly a man who advocates everything for peace, and as there is for him no peace when Frances is not satisfied, we gain little by our appeal to him except a promise that he will attend later to the troubles of the Polish girl. But later, as earlier, Frances triumphs, and I soon bid good-by to my seatmate and watch her tear-stained face disappear down the dingy hallway. She was a skilled tailoress, but she could not cut out men's garments, so Frances dismissed her. I wonder when my turn will come, for I am a green hand and yet determined to keep the American spirit. For the sake of justice I will not be downed by Frances.

It is hard to make friends with the girls; we dare not converse lest a fresh insult be hurled at us. For every mistake I receive a loud, severe correction. When night comes I am exhausted. The work is easy, yet the moral atmosphere is more wearing than the noise of many machines. My job is often changed during the week. I do everything as a greenhorn, but I work hard and pay attention, so that there is no excuse to dismiss me.

"I am only staying here between jobs," the girl

next me volunteers at lunch. "My regular place burnt out. You couldn't get *me* to work under *her*. I wouldn't stand it even if they do pay well." She is an American.

"You're lucky to be so independent," says a German woman whose dull silence I had hitherto taken for ill nature. "I'm glad enough to get the money. I was up this morning at five, working. There's myself and my mother and my little girl, and not a cent but what I make. My husband is sick. He's in Arizona."

"What were you doing at five?" I asked.

"I have a trade," she answers. "I work on hair goods. It don't bring me much, but I get in a few hours night and morning and it helps some. There's so much to pay."

She was young, but youth is no lover of discomfort. Hardships had chased every vestige of *jeunesse* from her high, wrinkled brow and tired brown eyes. Like a mirror held against despair her face reflected no ray of hope. She was not rebellious, but all she knew of life was written there in lines whose sadness a smile now and again intensified.

Added to the stale, heavy atmosphere there is now a smell of coffee and tobacco smoke. The old hands have boiled a noon beverage on the gas; the tailors smoke an after-dinner pipe. Put up in newspaper by Mrs. Wood, at my matinal departure, my lunches, after a journey across the city, held tightly under my

arm, become, before eating, a block of food, a composite meal in which I can distinguish original bits of ham sandwich and apple pie. The work, however, does not seem hard to me. I sew on buttons, rip trousers, baste coat sleeves—I do all sorts of odd jobs from eight until six, without feeling, in spite of the bad air, any great physical fatigue which ten minutes' brisk walk does not shake off. But never have the hours dragged so; the moral weariness in the midst of continual scolding and abuse are unbearable. Each night I come to a firm decision to leave the following day, but weakly I return, sure of my dollar and dreading to face again the giant city in search of work. About four one afternoon, well on in the week, Frances brings me a pair of military trousers; the stripes of cloth at the side seam are to be ripped off. I go to work cheerfully cutting the threads and slipping one piece of cloth from the other.

Apparently Frances is exasperated that I should do the job in an easy way. It is the only way I know to rip, but Frances knows another way that breaks your back and almost puts your eyes out, that makes you tired and behindhand and sure of a scolding. She shows me how to rip her way. The two threads of the machine, one from above and one from below, which make the stitch, must be separated. The work must be turned first on the wrong, then on the right side, the scissors must lift

first the upper, then the under thread. I begin by cutting a long hole in the trousers, which I hide so Frances will not see it. She has frightened me into dishonesty. Arrived at the middle of the stripe I am obliged to turn the trousers wrong side out and right side out again every other stitch. While I was working in this way, getting more enraged every moment, a bedbug ran out of the seam between my fingers. I killed it. It was full of blood and made a wet red spot on the table. Then I put down the trousers and drew away my chair. It was useless saying anything to the girl next me. She was a Pole, dull, sullen, without a friendly word; but the two women beyond had told me once that they pitied Frances' husband, so I looked to them for support in what I was about to do.

"There's bedbugs in them clothes," I said. "I won't work on 'em. No, sir, not if she sends me away this very minute."

In a great hurry Frances passed me twice. She called out angrily both times without waiting for an answer:

"Why don't you finish them pants?"

Frances was a German. She wore two rhinestone combs in her frizzes, which held also dust and burnt odds and ends of hair. She had no lips whatever. Her mouth shut completely over them after each tirade. Her eyes were separated by two deep scowls and her voice was shrill and nasal.

On her third round she faced me with the same question:

"Why don't you finish them pants?"

"Because," I answered this time, "there's bedbugs in 'em and I ain't goin' to touch 'em!"

"Oh! my!" she taunted me, in a sneering voice, "that's dreadful, ain't it? Bedbugs! Why, you need only just look on the floor to see 'em running around anywhere!"

I said nothing more, and this remark was the last Frances ever addressed to me.

"Mike!" she called to the presser in the corner, "will you have this *young lady's* card made out."

She gave me no further work to do, but, too humiliated to sit idle, I joined a group of girls who were sewing badges.

We had made up all description of political badges—badges for the court, for processions, school badges, military badges, flimsy bits of coloured ribbon and gold fringe which go the tour of the world, rallying men to glory. In the dismal twilight our fingers were now busied with black-and-silver "in memoriam" badges, to be worn as a last tribute to some dead member of a coterie who would follow him to the grave under the emblem that had united them.

We were behindhand for the dead as well as for the living. At six the power was turned off, the

machine hands went home, there was still an unfinished heap of black badges.

I got up and put on my things in the dark closet that served for dressing-room. Frances called to the hand sewers in her rasping voice:

"You darsn't leave till you've finished them badges."

How could I feel the slavery they felt? My nerves were sensitive; I was unaccustomed to their familiar hardships. But on the other hand, my prison had an escape; they were bound within four walls; I dared to rebel knowing the resources of the black silk emergency bag, money lined. They for their living must pay with moral submission as well as physical fatigue. There was nothing between them and starvation except the success of their daily effort. What opposition could the German woman place, what could she risk, knowing that two hungry mouths waited to be fed beside her own?

With a farewell glance at the rubbish-strewn room, the high, grimy windows, the group of hand sewers bent over their work in the increasing darkness, I started down the stairs. A hand was laid on my arm, and I looked up and saw Mike's broad Irish face and sandy head bending toward me.

"I suppose you understand," he said, "that there'll be no more work for you."

"Yes," I answered, "I understand," and we

exchanged a glance that meant we both agreed it was Frances' fault.

In the shop below I found Mr. F. and returned the fifty cents he had advanced me. He seemed surprised at this.

"I'm sorry," he said, in his gentle voice, "that we couldn't arrange things."

"I'm sorry, too," I said. But I dared not add a word against Frances. She had terrorized me like the rest, and though I knew I never would see her again, her pale, lifeless mask haunted me. I remembered a remark the German woman had made when Frances dismissed the Polish girl: "People ought to make it easy, and not hard, for others to earn a living."

At the end of this somewhat agitating day I returned to my tenement lodgings as to a haven of rest. There was one other lodger besides myself: she was studying music on borrowed money at four dollars a lesson. Obviously she was a victim to luxury in the same degree as the young women with whom I had lunched at the bakery. Nothing that a rich society girl might have had been left out of her wardrobe, and borrowed money seemed as good as any for making a splurge.

Miss Arnold was something of a snob, intellectual and otherwise. It was evident from my wretched clothes and poor grammar that I was not accustomed to ladies of her type, but, far from

sparing me, she humiliated me with all sorts of questions.

"I'm tired of taffeta jackets, aren't you?" she would ask, apropos of my flimsy ulster. "I had taffeta last year, with velvet and satin this winter; but I don't know what I'll get yet this summer."

After supper, on my return, I found her sitting in the parlour with Mrs. Brown. They never lighted the gas, as there was an electric lamp which sent its rays aslant the street and repeated the pattern of the window curtains all over Mrs. Brown's face and hands.

Drawn up on one end of the horsehair sofa, Miss Arnold, in a purple velvet blouse, chatted to Mrs. Brown and me.

"I'm from Jacksonville," she volunteered, patting her masses of curly hair. "Do you know anybody from Jacksonville? It's an elegant town, so much wealth, so many retired farmers, and it's such an educational centre. Do you like reading?" she asked me.

"I don't get time," is my response.

"Oh, my!" she rattles on. "I'm crazy about reading. I do love blank verse—it makes the language so choice, like in Shakespeare."

Mrs. Brown and I, being in the majority as opposed to this autocrat, remain placid. A current of understanding exists between us. Miss Arnold, on the other hand, finds our ignorance a flattering back-

ground for her learning and adventures. She is so obviously a woman of the world on the tenement horsehair sofa.

"In case you don't like your work," she Lady Bountifuls me, "I can get you a stylish place as maid with some society people just out of Chicago —friends of mine, an elegant family."

"I don't care to live out," I respond, thanking her. "I like my Sundays and my evenings off."

Mrs. Brown pricks up her ears at this, and I notice that thereafter she keeps close inquiry as to how my Sundays and evenings are spent.

But the bell rings. Miss Arnold is called for by friends to play on the piano at an evening entertainment. Mrs. Brown and I, being left alone, begin a conversation of the personal kind, which is the only resource among the poor. If she had had any infirmity—a wooden leg or a glass eye—she would naturally have begun by showing it to me, but as she had been spared intact she chose second best.

"I've had lots of shocks," she said, rocking back and forth in a squeaky rocking-chair. The light from over the way flickered and gleamed. Mrs. Brown's broad, yellow face and gray hair were now brilliant, now somber, as she rocked in and out of the silver rays. Her voice was a metallic whine, and when she laughed against her regular, even, false teeth there was a sound like the mechanical yelp of a toy cat. Married at sixteen, her whole life had been

Brown on earth below and God in His heaven above. Childless, she and Brown had spent over fifty years together. It was natural in the matter of shocks the first she should tell me about was Brown's death. The story began with "a breakfast one Sunday morning at nine o'clock. . . . Brown always made the fire, raked down the ashes, set the coffee to boil, and when the toast and eggs were ready he called me. And that wasn't one morning, mind you—it was every morning for fifty years. But this particular morning I noticed him speaking strange; his tongue was kind o' thick. He didn't hardly eat nothing, and as soon as I'd done he got up and carried the ashes downstairs to dump 'em. When he come up he seemed dizzy. I says to him, 'Don't you feel good?' but he didn't seem able to answer. He made like he was going to undress. He put his hand in his pocket for his watch, and he put it in again for his pocketbook; but the second time it stayed in—he couldn't move it no more; it was dead and cold when I touched it. He leaned up against the wall, and I tried to get him over on to the sofa. When I looked into his eyes I see that he was gone. He couldn't stand, but I held on to him with all my force; I didn't let his head strike as he went down. *When he fell we fell together.*" Her voice was choked; even now after three years as she told the story she could not believe it herself.

Presently when she is calm again she continues

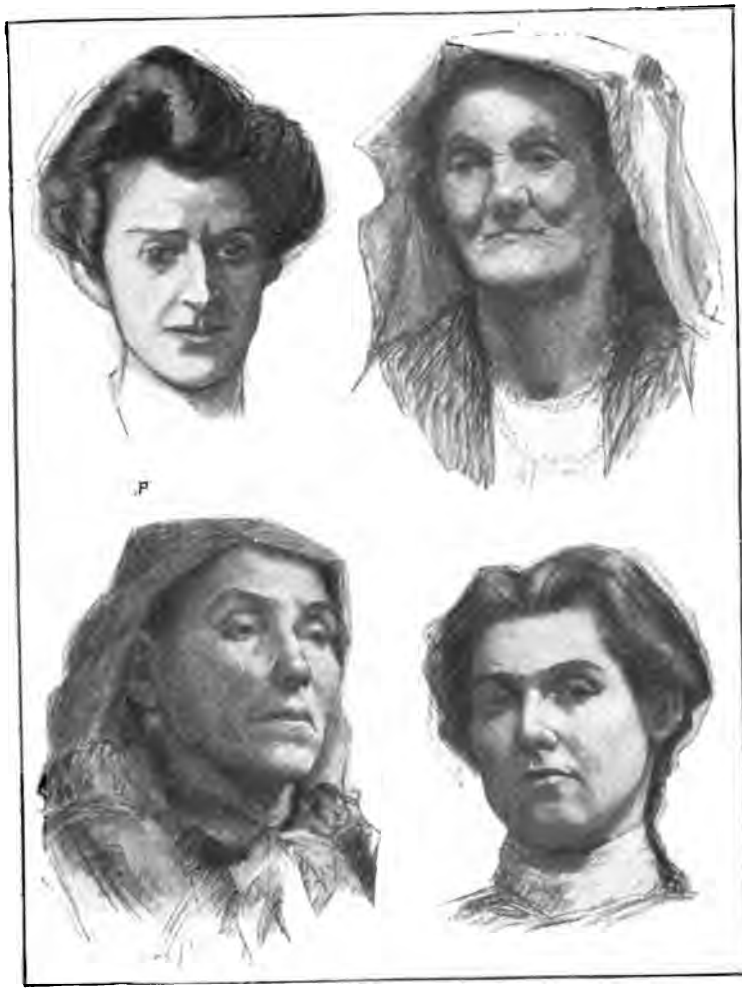
the recital of her shocks—three times struck by lightning and once run over. Her simple descriptions are straightforward and dramatic. As she talks the wind blows against the windows, the shutters rattle and an ugly white china knob, against which the curtains are draped, falls to the floor. Tenderly, amazed, she picks it up and looks at it.

"Brown put that up," she says; "there hasn't no hand touched it since his'n."

Proprietor of this house in which she lives, Mrs. Brown is fairly well off. She rents one floor to an Italian family, one to some labourers, and one to an Irishman and his wife who get drunk from time to time and rouse us in the night with tumult and scuffling. She has a way of disappearing for a week or more and returning without giving any account of herself. Relations are strained, and Mrs. Brown in speaking of her says:

"I don't care what trouble I was in, I wouldn't call in that Irish woman. I don't have anything to do with her. I'd rather get the Dago next door." And hereafter follows a mild tirade against the Italians—the same sentiments I have heard expressed before in the labouring centres.

"They're kind folks and good neighbours," Mrs. Brown explains, "but they're different from us. They eat what the rest of us throw away, and there's no work they won't do. They're putting money aside fast; most of 'em owns their own houses; but



CHICAGO TYPES

since they've moved into this neighbourhood the price of property's gone down. I don't have nothing to do with 'em. We don't any of us. They're not like us; they're different."

Without letting a day elapse I started early the following morning in search of a new job. The paper was full of advertisements, but there was some stipulation in each which narrowed my possibilities of getting a place, as I was an unskilled hand. There was, however, one simple "Girls wanted!" which I answered, prepared for anything but an electric sewing machine.

The address took me to a more fashionable side of the city, near the lake; a wide expanse of pale, shimmering water, it lay a refreshing horizon for eyes long used to poverty's quarters. Like a sea, it rolled white-capped waves toward the shore from its far-away emerald surface where sail-freighted barks traveled at the wind's will. Free from man's disfiguring touch, pure, immaculate, it appeared bridelike through a veil of morning mist. And at its very brink are the turmoil and confusion of America's giant industries. In less than an hour I am receiving wages from a large picture frame company in East Lake Street. Once more I have made the observation that men are more agreeable bosses than women. The woman, when she is not exceptionally disagreeable, like Frances, is always annoying. She bothers and nags; things must be

done her way; she enjoys the legitimate minding of other people's business. Aiming at results only, the masculine mind is more tranquil. Provided you get your work done, the man boss doesn't care what methods you take in doing it. For the woman boss, whether you get your work done or not, you must do it her way The overseer at J.'s picture frame manufactory is courteous, friendly, considerate. I have a feeling that he wishes me to coöperate with him, not to be terrorized and driven to death by him. My spirits rise at once, my ambition is stimulated, and I desire his approval. The work is all done by the piece, he explains to me, telling me the different prices. The girls work generally in teams of three, dividing profits. Nothing could be more modern, more middle-class, more popular, more philistine than the production of J.'s workrooms. They are the cheap imitations fed to a public hungry for luxury or the semblance of it. Nothing is genuine in the entire shop. Water colours are imitated in chromo, oils are imitated in lithograph, white carved wood frames are imitated in applications of pressed brass. Great works of art are belittled by processes cheap enough to be within reach of the poorest pocket. Framed pictures are turned out by the thousand dozens, every size, from the smallest domestic scene, which hangs over the baby's crib in a Harlem flat, to the large wedding-present size placed over the piano in the front parlour.

The range of subjects covers a familiar list of comedies or tragedies—the partings before war, the interior behind prison bars, the game of marbles, the friendly cat and dog, the chocolate girl, the skipper and his daughter, etc., etc.

My job is easy, but slow. With a hammer and tacks I fasten four tin mouldings to the four corners of a gilt picture frame. Twenty-five cents for a hundred is the pay given me, and it takes me half a day to do this many; but my comrades don't allow me to get discouraged.

"You're doing well," a red-haired *vis-a-vis* calls to me across the table. And the foreman, who comes often to see how I am getting along, tells me that the next day we are to begin team-work, which pays much better.

The hours are ten a day: from seven until five thirty, with twenty-five minutes at noon instead of half an hour. The extra five minutes a day mount up to thirty minutes a week and let us off at five on Saturdays.

The conversation around me leads me to suppose that my companions are not downtrodden in any way, nor that they intend letting work interfere with happiness. They have in their favour the most blessed of all gifts—youth. The tragic faces one meets with are of the women breadwinners whose burdens are overwhelming and of the children in whom physical fatigue arrests development and

all possibility of pleasure. My present team-mates and those along the rest of the room are Americans between fourteen and twenty-four years of age, full of unconscious hope for the future, which is natural in healthy, well-fed youth, taking their work cheerily as a self-imposed task in exchange for which they can have more clothes and more diversions during their leisure hours.

The profitable job given us on the following day is monotonous and dirty, but we net $1.05 each. There is a mechanical roller which passes before us, carrying at irregular intervals a large sheet of coloured paper covered with glue. My *vis-à-vis* and I lay the palms of our right hands on to the glue surface and lift the sheet of paper to its place on the table before us, over a stiff square of bristol board. The boss of the team fixes the two sheets together with a brush which she manipulates skilfully. We are making in this way the stiff backs which hold the pictures into their frames. When we have fallen into the proper swing we finish one hundred sheets every forty-five minutes. We could work more rapidly, but the sheets are furnished to us at this rate, and it is so comfortable that conversation is not interrupted. The subjects are the same as elsewhere—dress, young men, entertainments. The girls have "beaux" and "steady beaux." The expression, "Who is she going with?" means who is her steady beau. "I've got Jim Smith *now*, but I don't

know whether I'll keep him," means that Jim Smith is on trial as a beau and may become a "steady." They go to Sunday night subscription dances and arrive Monday morning looking years older than on Saturday, after having danced until early morning. "There's nothing so smart for a ball," the mundane of my team tells us, "as a black skirt and white silk waist."

About ten in the morning most of us eat a pickle or a bit of cocoanut cake or some titbit from the lunch parcel which is opened seriously at twelve.

The light is good, the air is good, the room where we work is large and not crowded, the foreman is kind and friendly, the girls are young and cheerful; one can make $7 to $8 a week.

The conditions at J.'s are too favourable to be interesting, and, having no excuse to leave, I disappear one day at lunch time and never return to get my apron or my wages. I shall be obliged to draw upon the resources of the black silk bag, but before returning to my natural condition of life I wish to try one more place: a printing job. There are quantities of advertisements in the papers for girls needed to run presses of different sorts, so on the very afternoon of my self-dismissal I start through the hot summer streets in search of a situation. On the day when my appearance is most forlorn I find policemen always as officially polite as when I am dressed in my best. Other people of whom I inquire

my way are sometimes curt, sometimes compassionate, seldom indifferent, and generally much nicer or not nearly as nice as they would be to a rich person. Poor old women to whom I speak often call me "dear" in answering.

Under the trellis of the elevated road the "cables" clang their way. Trucks and automobiles, delivery wagons and private carriages plunge over the rough pavements. The sidewalks are crowded with people who are dressed for business, and who, whether men or women, are a business type; the drones who taste not of the honey stored in the hives which line the streets and tower against the blue sky, veiling it with smoke. The orderly rush of busy people, among whom I move toward an address given in the paper, is suddenly changed into confusion and excitement by the bell of a fire-engine which is dragged clattering over the cobbles, followed closely by another and another before the sound of the horses' hoofs have died away. Excitement for a moment supersedes business. The fire takes precedence before the office, and a crowd stands packed against policemen's arms, gazing upward at a low brick building which sends forth flames hotter than the brazen sun, smoke blacker than the perpetual veil of soot.

I compare the dingy gold number over the burning door with the number in print on the newspaper slip held between my thumb and forefinger. Decidedly this is not one of my lucky days. The numbers

correspond. But there are other addresses and I collect a series of replies. The employer in a box factory on the West Side takes my address and promises to let me know if he has a vacancy for an unskilled hand. Another boss printer, after much urging on my part, consents to give me a trial the following Monday at three dollars a week. A kindly forelady in a large printing establishment on Wabash Avenue sends me away because she wants only trained workers. "I'm real sorry," she says. "You're from the East, aren't you? I notice you speak with an accent."

By this time it is after three in the afternoon; my chances are diminishing as the day goes on and others apply before me. There is one more possibility at a box and label company which has advertised for a girl to feed a Gordon press. I have never heard of a Gordon press, but I make up my mind not to leave the label company without the promise of a job for the very next day. The stairway is dingy and irregular. My spirits are not buoyant as I open a swinging door and enter a room with a cage in the middle, where a lady cashier, dressed in a red silk waist, sits on a high stool overlooking the office. Three portly men, fat, well nourished, evidently of one family, are installed behind yellow ash desks, each with a lady typewriter at his right hand. I go timidly up to the fattest of the three. He is in shirt sleeves, evidently feeling

the heat painfully He pretends to be very busy and hardly looks up when I say:

"I seen your ad. in the paper this morning."

"You're rather late," is his answer. "I've got two girls engaged already."

"Too late!" I say with an intonation which interrupts his work for a minute while he looks at me. I profit by this moment, and, changing from tragedy to a good-humoured smile, I ask:

"Say, are you sure those girls 'll come? You can't always count on us, you know."

He laughs at this. "Have you ever run a Gordon press?"

"No, sir; but I'm awful handy."

"Where have you been working?"

"At J.'s in Lake Street."

"What did you make?"

"A dollar a day."

"Well, you come in to-morrow about eleven and I'll tell you then whether I can give you anything to do."

"Can't you be sure now?"

Truly disappointed, my voice expresses the eagerness I feel.

"Well," the fat man says indulgently, "you come in to-morrow morning at eight and I'll give you a job."

The following day I begin my last and by far my most trying apprenticeship.

The noise of a single press is deafening. In the room where I work there are ten presses on my row, eight back of us and four printing machines back of them. On one side of the room only are there windows. The air is heavy with the sweet, stifling smell of printer's ink and cheap paper. A fine rain of bronze dust sifts itself into the hair and clothes of the girls at our end of the room, where they are bronzing coloured advertisements. The work is all done standing; the hours are from seven until six, with half an hour at noon, and holiday at one thirty on Saturdays. It is to *feed* a machine that I am paid three dollars a week. The expression is admirably chosen. The machine's iron jaws yawn for food; they devour all I give, and when by chance I am slow they snap hungrily at my hand and would crush my fingers did I not snatch them away, feeling the first cold clutch. It is nervous work. Each leaf to be printed must be handled twice; 5,000 circulars or bill-heads mean 10,000 gestures for the printer, and this is an afternoon's work.

Into the square marked out for it by steel guards the paper must be slipped with the right hand, while the machine is open; with the left hand the printed paper must be pulled out and a second fitted in its place before the machine closes again. What a master to serve is this noisy iron mechanism animated by steam! It gives not a moment's respite to the worker, whose thoughts must never wander

from her task. The girls are pale. Their complexions without exception are bad.

We are bossed by men. My boss is kind, and, seeing that I am ambitious, he comes now and then and prints a few hundred bill-heads for me. There is some complaining *sotto voce* of the other boss, who, it appears, is a hard taskmaster. Both are very young, both chew tobacco and expectorate long, brown, wet lines of tobacco juice on to the floor. While waiting for new type I get into conversation with the boss of ill-repute. He has an honest, serious face; his eyes are evidently more accustomed to judging than to trusting his fellow beings. He is communicative.

"Do you like your job?" he asks.

"Yes, first rate."

"They don't pay enough. I give notice last week and got a raise. I guess I'll stay on here until about August."

"Then where are you going?"

"Going home," he answers. "I've been away from home for seven years. I run away when I was thirteen and I've been knocking around ever since, takin' care of myself, makin' a livin' one way or another. My folks lives in California. I've been from coast to coast—and I tell you I'll be mighty glad to get back."

"Ever been sick?"

"Yes, twice. It's no fun. No matter how much

licking a boy gets he ought never to leave home. The first year or so you don't mind it so much, but when you've been among strangers two years, three years, all alone, sick or well, you begin to feel you must get back to your own folks."

"Are you saving up?" I ask.

He nods his head, not free to speak for tobacco juice.

"I'll be able to leave here in August," he explains, when he has finished spitting, "for Omaha. In three months I can save up enough to get on as far as Salt Lake, and in another three months I can move on to San Francisco. I tell you," he adds, returning to his work, "a person ought never to leave home." He had nine months of work and privation before reaching the goal toward which he had been yearning for years. With what patience he appears possessed compared to our fretfulness at the fast express trains, which seem to crawl when they carry us full speed homeward toward those we love! Nine months, two hundred and seventy days, ten-hour working days, to wait. He was manly. He had the spirit of adventure; his experience was wide and his knowledge of men extended; he had managed to take care of himself in one way or another for seven years, the most trying and decisive in a boy's life. He had not gone to the bad, evidently, and to his credit he was homeward bound. His history was something out of the ordinary; yet beyond the circle where he

worked and was considered a hard taskmaster he was a nonentity—a star in the milky way, a star whose faint rays, without individual brilliancy, added to the general luster.

The first day I had a touch of pride in getting easily ahead of the new girl who started in when I did. From my machine I could see only the back of her head; it was shaking disapproval at every stroke she made and had to make over again. She had a mass of untidy hair and a slouchy skirt that slipped out from her belt in the back. If not actually stupid, she was slow, and the foreman and the girl who took turns teaching her exchanged glances, meaning that they were exhausting their patience and would readily give up the job. I was pleased at being included in these glances, and had a miserable moment of vanity at lunch time when the old girls, the habitués, came after me to eat with them. The girl with the untidy hair and the long skirt sat quite by her self. Without unfolding her newspaper bundle, she took bites of things from it, as though she were a little ashamed of her lunch. My moment of vanity had passed. I went over to her, not knowing whether her appearance meant a slipshod nature or extreme poverty. As we were both new girls, there was no indiscretion in my direct question:

"Like your job?"

I could not understand what she answered, so I continued: "Ever worked before?"

She opened her hands and held them out to me. In the palm of one there was a long scar that ran from wrist to forefinger. Two nails had been worn off below the quick and were cracked through the middle. The whole was gloved in an iron callous, streaked with black.

"Does that look like work?" was her response. It was almost impossible to hear what she said. Without a palate, she forced the words from her mouth in a strange monotone. She was one of nature's monstrous failures. Her coarse, opaque skin covered a low forehead and broad, boneless nose; her teeth were crumbling with disease, and into her full lower lip some sharp tool had driven a double scar. She kept her hand over her mouth when she talked, and except for this movement of self-consciousness her whole attitude was one of resignation and humility. Her eyes in their dismal surroundings lay like clear pools in a swamp's midst reflecting blue sky.

"What was you doing to get your hands like that?" I asked.

"Tipping shoe-laces. I had to quit, 'cause they cut the pay down. I could do twenty-two gross in a day, working until eight o'clock, and I didn't care how hard I worked so long as I got good pay—$9 a week. But the employer'd been a workman himself, and they're the worst kind. He cut me down to $4 a week, so I quit."

"Do you live home?"

"Yes. I give all I make to my mother, and she gives me my clothes and board. Almost anywhere I can make $7 a week, and I feel when I earn that much like I was doing right. But it's hard to work and make nothing. I'm slow to learn," she smiled at me, covering her mouth with her hand, "but I'll get on to it by and by and go as fast as any one; only I'm not very strong."

"What's the matter with you?"

"Heart disease for one thing, and then I'm so nervous. It's kind of hard to have to work when you're not able. To-day I can hardly stand, my head's aching so. They make the poor work for just as little as they can, don't they? It's not the work I mind, but if I can't give in my seven a week at home I get to worrying."

Now and then as she talked in her inarticulate pitiful voice the tears added luster to her eyes as her emotions welled up within her.

The machines began to roar and vibrate again. The noon recess was over. She went back to her job. Her broad, heavy hands began once more to serve a company on whose moderate remuneration she depended for her daily bread. Her silhouette against the window where she stood was no longer an object for my vain eyes to look upon with a sense of superiority. I could hear the melancholy intonation of her voice, pronouncing words of courage over

her disfigured underlip. She was one of nature's failures—one of God's triumphs.

Saturday night my fellow lodger, Miss Arnold, and I made an expedition to the spring opening of a large dry-goods shop in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Brown's. I felt rather humble in my toil-worn clothes to accompany the young woman, who had an appearance of prosperity which borrowed money alone can give. But she encouraged me, and we started together for the principal street of the quarter whose history was told in its show-case windows. Pawnshops and undertakers, bakeries and soda-water fountains were ranged side by side on this highway, as the necessity for them is ranged with incongruous proximity in the existence of those who live pell-mell in moral and material disorder after the manner of the poor. There was even a wedding coach in the back of the corner undertaker's establishment, and in the front window a coffin, small and white, as though death itself were more attractive in the young, as though the little people of the quarter were nearer Heaven and more suggestive of angels than their life-worn elders. The spotless tiny coffin with its fringe and satin tufting had its share of the ideal, mysterious, unused and costly; in the same store with the wedding coach, it suggested festivity: a reunion to celebrate with tears a small pilgrim's right to sleep at last undisturbed.

The silver rays of the street lamps mingled with

the yellow light of the shop windows, and on the sidewalk there was a cosmopolitan public. Groups of Italian women crooned to each other in their soft voices over the bargains for babies displayed at the spring opening; factory girls compared notes, chattered, calculated, tried to resist, and ended by an extravagant choice; the German women looked and priced and bought nothing; the Hungarians had evidently spent their money on arriving. From the store window wax figures of the ideal woman, clad in latest Parisian garb, with golden hair and blue eyes, gazed down benignly into the faces uplifted with envy and admiration. Did she not plainly say to them "For $17 you can look as I do"?

The store was apparently flourishing, and except for such few useful articles as stockings and shirts it was stocked with trash. Patronized entirely by labouring men and women, it was an indication to their needs. Here, for example, was a stand hung with silk dress skirts, trimmed with lace and velvet. They were made after models of expensive dressmakers and were attempts at the sort of thing a Mme. de Rothschild might wear at the Grand Prix de Paris.

Varying from $11 to $20, there was not one of the skirts made of material sufficiently solid to wear for more than a few Sunday outings. On another counter there were hats with extravagant garlands of flowers, exaggerated bows and plumes, wraps

THE REAR OF A CHICAGO TENEMENT

with ruffles of lace and long pendant bows; silk boleros; a choice of things never meant to be imitated in cheap quality.

I watched the customers trying on. Possessed of grace and charm in their native costumes, hatless, with gay-coloured shawls on their shoulders, the Italian women, as soon as they donned the tawdry garb of the luxury-loving labourer, were common like the rest. In becoming prosperous Americans, animated by the desire for material possession which is the strength and the weakness of our countrymen, they lost the character that pleases us, the beauty we must go abroad to find.

Miss Arnold priced everything, compared quality and make with Jacksonville productions, and decided to buy nothing, but in refusing to buy she had an air of opulence and taste hard to please which surpassed the effect any purchase could have made.

Sunday morning Mrs. Brown asked me to join her and Miss Arnold for breakfast They were both in slippers and dressing-gowns. We boiled the coffee and set the table with doughnuts and sweet cakes, which Miss Arnold kept in a paper bag in her room.

"I hardly ever eat, except between meals," she explained. "A nibble of cake or candy is as much as I can manage, my digestion is so poor."

"Ever since Brown died," the widow responded, "I've had my meals just the same as though he were here. All I want," she went on, as we seated our-

selves and exchanged courtesies in passing the bread and butter, "all I want is somebody to be kind to me. I've got a young niece that I've tried to have with me. I wrote to her and says: 'Your auntie's heart's just crying out for you!' And I told her I'd leave her all I've got. But she said she didn't feel like she could come."

As soon as breakfast is over the mundane member of the household starts off on a day's round of visits. When the screen door has shut upon her slender silhouette, Mrs. Brown settles down for a chat. She takes out the brush and comb, unbraids her silver locks and arranges them while she talks.

"Miss Arnold's always on the go; she's awful nervous. These society people aren't happy. Life's not all pleasure for them. You can be sure they have their ups and downs like the rest of us."

"I guess that's likely," is my response.

"They don't tell the truth always, in the first place. They say there's got to be deceit in society, and that these stylish people pretend all sorts of things. Well, then, all I say is," and she pricks the comb into the brush with emphasis, "all I say is, you better keep out of society."

She had twisted her gray braids into a coil at the back of her head, and dish-washing is now the order of the day. As we splash and wipe, Mrs. Brown looks at me rather closely. She is getting ready to

speak. I can feel this by a preliminary rattle of her teeth.

"You're a new girl here," she begins; "you ain't been long in Chicago. I just thought I'd tell you about a girl who was workin' here in the General Electric factory. She was sixteen—a real nice-lookin' girl from the South. She left her mother and come up here alone. It wasn't long before she got to foolin' round with one of the young men over to the factory. They were both young; they didn't mean no harm; but one day she come an' told me, cryin' like anythin', that she was in trouble, and her young man had slipped off up to Michigan."

Here Mrs. Brown stopped to see if I was interested, and as I responded with a heartfelt "Oh, my!" she went on:

"Well, you ought to have seen that girl's sufferin', her loneliness for her mother. I'd come in her room sometimes at midnight—the very room you have now—and find her on the floor, weepin' her heart out. I want to tell you never to get discouraged. Just you listen to what happened. The gentleman from the factory got a sheriff and they started up north after the young man, determined to get him by force if they couldn't by kindness. Well, they found him and they brought him back; he was willin' to come, and they got everythin' fixed up for the weddin' without tellin' her a thing about it, and one day she was sittin' right there," she pointed to the

rocking chair in the front parlour window, "when he come in. He was carryin' a big bunch of cream roses, tied with long white ribbons. He offered 'em to her, but she wouldn't look at them nor at him. After awhile they went together into her room and talked for half an hour, and when they come back she had consented to marry him. He was real kind. He kept askin' me if she had cried much and thankin' me for takin' care of her. They were married, and when the weddin' was over she didn't want to stay with him. She said she wanted her mother, but we talked to her and told her what was right, and things was fixed up between them."

She had taken down from its hook in the corner sunlight the canary bird and his cage. She put them on the table and prepared to give the bird his bath and fresh seed.

"You see," she said, drawing up a chair, "that's what good employers will do for you. If you're working in a good place they'll do right by you, and it don't pay to get down-hearted."

I thanked her and showed the interest I truly felt in the story. Evidently I must account for my Sundays! It was with the bird now that Mrs. Brown continued her conversation. He was a Rip Van Winkle in plumage. His claws trailed over the sand of the cage. Except when Mrs. Brown had a lodger or two with her, the bird was the only living thing in her part of the tenement.

"I've had him twenty-five years," she said to me. "Brown give him to me. I guess I'd miss him if he died." And presently she repeated again: "I don't believe I even know how much I'd miss him."

On the last evening of my tenement residence I was sitting in a restaurant of the quarter, having played truant from Mrs. Wood's, whose Friday fish dinner had poisoned me. My hands had been inflamed and irritated in consequence, and I was now intent upon a good clean supper earned by ten hours' work. My back was turned to the door, which I knew must be open, as I felt a cold wind. The lake brought capricious changes of the temperature: the thermometer had fallen the night before from seventy to thirty. I turned to see who the newcomer might be. The sight of him set my heart beating faster. The restaurant keeper was questioning the man to find out who he was. . . . He was evidently nobody—a fragment of anonymous humanity lashed into *debris* upon the edge of a city's vortex; a remnant of flesh and bones for human appetites to feed on; a battleground of disease and vice; a beggar animated by instinct to get from others what he could no longer earn for himself; the type *par excellence* who has worn out charity organizations; the poor wreck of a soul that would create pity if there were none of it left in the world. He was asking for food. The proprietor gave him the

address of a free lodging-house and turned him away. He pulled his cap over his head; the door opened and closed, letting in a fresh gale of icy air. The man was gone. I turned back to my supper. Scientific philanthropists would have means of proving that such men are alone to blame for their condition; that this one was in all probability a drunkard, and that it would be useless, worse than useless, to help him. But he was cold and hungry and penniless, and I knew it. I went as swiftly as I could to overtake him. He had not traveled far, lurching along at a snail's pace, and he was startled when I came up to him. One of his legs was longer than the other; it had been crushed in an accident. They were not pairs, his legs, and neither were his eyes pairs; one was big and blind, with a fixed pupil, and the other showed all his feelings. Across his nose there was a scar, a heavy scar, pale like the rest of his face. He was small and had sandy hair. The directors of charity bureaus could have detected perhaps a faint resemblance to the odour of liquor as he breathed a halo of frosty air over his scraggly red beard.

Through the weather-beaten coat pinned over it his bare chest was visible.

"It's a cold night!" I began. "Are you out of a job?"

With his wistful eye he gave me a kind glance.

"I've been sick. There's a sharp pain right in

through here." He showed me a spot under his arm. "They thought at the hospital that I 'ad consumption. "But," his face brightened, "I haven't got it." He showed in his smile the life-warrant that kept him from suicide. *He wanted to live.*

"Where did you sleep last night?" I asked. "It was a cold night."

"To tell you the truth," he responded in his strong Scotch accent, "I slept in a wagon."

I proposed that we do some shopping together; he looked at me gratefully and limped along to a cheap clothing store, kept by an Italian. The warmth within was agreeable; there was a display of garments hung across the ceiling under the gas-light. My companion waited, leaning against the glass counter, while I priced the flannel shirts. To be sure, my own costume promised little bounty. The price of the shirt was seventy-five cents, and as soon as he heard this the poor man said:

"Oh, you mustn't spend as much as that."

Looking first at the pauper, then at me, the Italian leaned over and whispered to me, "I think I understand. You can have the shirt for sixty, and I'll put in a pair of socks, too."

Thus we had become a fraternity; all were poor, the stronger woe helping the weaker. . . . When his toilet was complete the poor man looked half a head taller.

"Shall I wrap up your old cap for you?" the salesman asked, and the other laughed a broken, long-disused laugh.

"I guess I won't need it any more," he said, turning to me.

His face had changed like the children's valentines that grow at a touch from a blank card to a glimpse of paradise.

Once in the street again we shook hands. I was going back to my supper. He was going, the charity directors would say, to pawn his shirt and coat.

The man had evidently not more than a few months to live; I was leaving Chicago the following day. We would undoubtedly never meet again.

As his bony hand lay in mine, his eyes looked straight at me. "Thank you," he said, and his last words were these:

"I'll stand by you."

It was a pledge of fraternity at parting. There was no material substance to promise. I took it to mean that he would stand by any generous impulses I might have; that he would be, as it were, a patron of spontaneous as opposed to organized charity; a patron of those who are never too poor to give to some one poorer; of those who have no scientific reasons for giving, no statistics, only compassion and pity; of those who want to aid not only the promising but the hopeless cases; of those whose charity is tolerant and maternal, patient with

the helpless, prepared for disappointments; not looking for results, ever ready to begin again, so long as the paradox of suffering and inability are linked together in humanity.

THE MEANING OF IT ALL

CHAPTER V

The Meaning of It All

Before concluding the recital of my experiences as a working girl, I want to sum up the general conclusions at which I arrived and to trace in a few words the history of my impressions What, first of all, was my purpose in going to live and work among the American factory hands? It was not to gratify simple curiosity; it was not to get material for a novel; it was not to pave the way for new philanthropic associations; it was not to obtain crude data, such as fill the reports of labour commissioners. My purpose was to *help* the working girl—to help her mentally, morally, physically. I considered this purpose visionary and unpractical, I considered it pretentious even, and I cannot say that I had any hope of accomplishing it. What did I mean by *help?* Did I mean a superficial remedy, a palliative? A variety of such remedies occurred to me as I worked, and I have offered them gladly for the possible aid of charitable people who have time and money to carry temporary relief to the poor. It was not relief of this kind that I meant by *help*. I meant an *amelioration in natural conditions*.

I was not hopeful of discovering any plan to bring about this amelioration, because I believed that the conditions, deplorable as they appear to us, of the working poor, were natural, the outcome of laws which it is useless to resist. I adopted the only method possible for putting my belief to the test. I did what had never been done. I was a skeptic and something of a sentimentalist when I started. I have become convinced, as I worked, that certain of the most unfortunate conditions are not natural, and that they can therefore be corrected. It is with hope for the material betterment of the bread-winning woman, for the moral advancement of the semi-breadwinner and the esthetic improvement of the country, that I submit what seems a rational plan.

For the first three weeks of my life as a factory girl I saw among my companions only one vast class of slaves, miserable drudges, doomed to dirt, ugliness and overwork from birth until death. My own physical sufferings were acute. My heart was torn with pity. I revolted against a society whose material demands were satisfied at the cost of minds and bodies. Labour appeared in the guise of a monster feeding itself on human lives. To every new impression I responded with indiscriminate compassion. It is impossible for the imagination to sustain for more than a moment at a time the terrible fatigue which a new hand like myself is

obliged to endure day after day; the disgust at foul smells, the revulsion at miserable food soaked in grease, the misery of a straw mattress, a sheetless bed with blankets whose acrid odour is stifling. The mind cannot grasp what it means to be frantic with pain in the shoulders and back before nine in the morning, and to watch the clock creep around to six before one has a right to drop into the chair that has stood near one all day long. Yet it is not until the system has become at least in a great measure used to such physical effort that one can judge without bias. When I had grown so accustomed to the work that I was equal to a long walk after ten hours in the factory; when I had become so saturated with the tenement smell that I no longer noticed it; when any bed seemed good enough for the healthy sleep of a working girl, and any food good enough to satisfy a hungry stomach, then and then only I began to see that in the great unknown class there were a multitude of classes which, aside from the ugliness of their esthetic surroundings and the intellectual inactivity which the nature of their occupation imposes, are not all to be pitied: they are a collection of human individuals with like capacities to our own. The surroundings into which they are born furnish little chance for them to develop their minds and their tastes, but their souls suffer nothing from working in squalour and sordidness. Certain acts of impulsive generosity, of disinterested

kindness, of tender sacrifice, of loyalty and fortitude shone out in the poverty-stricken wretches I met on my way, as the sun shines glorious in iridescence on the rubbish heap that goes to fertilize some rich man's fields.

My observations were confined chiefly to the women. Two things, however, regarding the men I noticed as fixed rules. They were all breadwinners; they worked because they needed the money to live; they supported entirely the woman, wife or mother, of the household who did not work. In many cases they contributed to the support of even the wage-earning females of the family: the woman who does not work when she does not need to work is provided for.

The women were divided into two general classes: Those who worked because they needed to earn their living, and those who came to the factories to be more independent than at home, to exercise their coquetry and amuse themselves, to make pin money for luxuries. The men formed a united class. They had a purpose in common. The women were in a class with boys and with children. They had nothing in common but their physical inferiority to man. The children were working from necessity, the boys were working from necessity; the only industrial unit complicating the problem were the girls who worked without being obliged to—the girls who had "all the

money they needed, but not all the money they wanted." To them the question of wages was not vital. They could afford to accept what the breadwinner found insufficient. They were better fed, better equipped than the self-supporting hand; they were independent about staying away from the factory when they were tired or ill, and they alone determined the reputation for irregularity in which the breadwinners were included.

Here, then, it seemed to me, was the first chance to offer help.

The self-supporting woman should be in competition only with other self-supporting industrial units. The problem for her class will settle itself, according to just and natural laws, when the purpose of this class is equally vital to all concerned. Relief, it seemed to me, could be brought to the breadwinner by separating from her the girl who works for luxuries.

How could this be done?

There is, I believe, a way in which it can be accomplished naturally. The non-self-supporting girls must be attracted into some field of work which requires instruction and an especial training, which pays them as well while calling into play higher faculties than the brutalizing machine labour. This field of work is industrial art: lace-making, hand-weaving, the fabrication of tissues and embroideries, gold-smithery, bookbinding, rug-weaving, wood-

carving and inlaying, all the branches of industrial art which could be executed by woman in her home, all the manual labour which does not require physical strength, which would not place the woman, therefore, as an inferior in competition with man, but would call forth her taste and skill, her training and individuality, at the same time being consistent with her destiny as a woman.

The American factory girl has endless ambition. She has a hunger for knowledge, for opportunities to better herself, to get on in the world, to improve. There is ample material in the factories as they exist for forming a new, higher, superior class of industrial art labourers. There is a great work to be accomplished by those who are willing to give their time and their money to lifting the non-breadwinners from the slavish, brutalizing machines at which they work, ignorant of anything better, and placing them by education, by cultivation, in positions of comparative freedom—freedom of thought, taste and personality.

Classes in industrial art already exist at the Simmons School in Boston and Columbia University in New York. New classes should be formed. Individual enterprise should start the ball and keep it rolling until it is large enough to be held in Governmental hands. It is not sufficient merely to form classes. The right sort of pupils should be attracted. There is not a factory which would not

furnish some material. The recompense for apprenticeship would be the social and intellectual advancement dear to every true American's heart. The question of wages would be self-regulating. At Hull House, Chicago, in the Industrial Art School it has been proved that, provided the models be simple in proportion to the ability of the artisan, the work can be sold as fast as it is turned out. The public is ready to buy the produce of hand-workers. The girls I speak of are fit for advancement. It is not a plan of charity, but one to ameliorate natural conditions.

Who will act as mediator?

I make an appeal to all those whose interests and leisure permit them to help in this double emancipation of the woman who toils for bread and the girl who works for luxuries.

MARIE VAN VORST

INTRODUCTORY

VII. A MAKER OF SHOES AT LYNN

VIII. THE SOUTHERN COTTON MILLS

IX. THE CHILD IN THE SOUTHERN MILLS

CHAPTER VI

INTRODUCTORY

THERE are no words too noble to extol the courage of mankind in its brave, uncomplaining struggle for existence. Idealism and estheticism have always had much to say in praise of the "beauty of toil." Carlyle has honoured it as a cult; epics have been written in its glory. When one has turned to and performed, day in and day out, this labour from ten to thirteen hours out of the twenty-four, with Sundays and legal holidays as the sole respite—to find at the month's end that the only possible economics are pleasures—one is at least better fitted to comprehend the standpoint of the worker; and one realizes that part of the universe is pursuing means to sustain an existence which, by reason of its hardship, they perforce cling to with indifference. I laid aside for a time everything pertaining to the class in which I was born and bred and became an American working-woman. I intended, in as far as was possible, to live as she lived, work as she worked. In thus approaching her I believed that I could share her ambitions, her pleasures, her privations.

Working by her side day after day, I hoped to be a mirror that should reflect the woman who toils, and later, when once again in my proper sphere of life, to be her expositor in an humble way—to be a mouthpiece for her to those who know little of the realities of everlasting labour.

I have in the following pages attempted to solve no problem—I have advanced no sociologic schemes. Conclusions must be drawn by those who read the simple, faithful description of the woman who toils as I saw her, as I worked beside her, grew to understand in a measure her point of view and to sympathize with her struggle.

MARIE VAN VORST.

Riverdale-on-Hudson,
1902.

A MAKER OF SHOES AT LYNN

CHAPTER VII

A Maker of Shoes at Lynn

"Those who work neither with their brains nor their hands are a menace to the public safety."—Roosevelt.

Well and good! In the great mobs and riots of history, what class is it which forms the brawn and muscle and sinew of the disturbance? The workmen and workwomen in whom discontent has bred the disease of riot, the abnormality, the abortion known as Anarchy, Socialism. The hem of the uprising is composed of idlers and loungers, indeed, but it is *the labourer's head* upon which the red cap of protest is seen above the vortex of the crowd.

That those who labour with their hands may have no cause to menace society, those who labour with their brains shall strive to encompass.

Evils in any system American progress is sure to cure. Shops such as the Plant shoe factory in Boston, with its eight-hour labour, ample provision for escape in case of fire, its model ventilating, lavish employment of new machinery—tells on the great manufacturing world.

Reason, human sympathy, throughout history have been enemies to slavery or its likeness: reason and sympathy suggest that time and place be given for the operative man and woman to rest, to benefit by physical culture, that the bowed figures might uplift the flabby muscles. Time is securely past when the manufacturers' greed may sweat the labourers' souls through the bodies' pores in order that more stuff may be turned out at cheaper cost.

The people through social corporations, through labour unions, have made their demands for shorter hours and better pay.

. . . . . .

LYNN

Luxuries to me are what necessities are to another. A boot too heavy, a dress ill-hung, a stocking too thick, are annoyances which to the self-indulgent woman of the world are absolute discomforts. To omit the daily bath is a little less than a crime in the calendar; an odour bordering on the foul creates nausea to nostrils ultra-refined; undue noises are nerve exhausting. If any three things are more unendurable to me than others, they are noises, bad smells and close air.

I am in no wise unique, but represent a class as real as the other class whose sweat, bone and fiber make up a vast human machine turning out necessities and luxuries for the market.

A DELICATE TYPE OF BEAUTY
At work in a Lynn shoe factory

ONE OF THE SWELLS OF THE FACTORY
A very expert "vamper," an Irish girl, earning from $10 to $14 a week

The clothes I laid aside on December 18, 1901, were as follows:

Hat	$ 40
Sealskin coat	200
Black cloth dress	150
Silk underskirt	25
Kid gloves	2
Underwear	30
	$447

The clothes I put on were as follows:

Small felt hat	$ .25
Woolen gloves	.25
Flannel shirt-waist	1.95
Gray serge coat	3.00
Black skirt	2.00
Underwear	1.00
Tippet	1.00
	$9.45

. . . . . .

When I outlined to my friends my scheme of presenting myself for work in a strange town with no introduction, however humble, and no friends to back me, I was assured that the chances were that I would in the end get nothing. I was told that it would be impossible to disguise my class, my speech; that I would be suspected, arouse curiosity and mistrust.

. . . . . .

One bitter December morning in 1901 I left Boston for Lynn, Mass. The route of my train ran close to marshes; frozen hard ice many feet

thick covered the rocks and hillocks of earth, and on the dazzling winter scene the sun shone brilliantly.

No sooner had I taken my place in my plain attire than my former personality slipped from me as absolutely as did the garments I had discarded. I was Bell Ballard. People from whose contact I had hitherto pulled my skirts away became my companions as I took my place shoulder to shoulder with the crowd of breadwinners.

Lynn in winter is ugly. The very town itself seemed numbed and blue in the intense cold well below zero. Even the Christmas-time greens in the streets and holly in the store windows could not impart festivity to this city of workers. The thoroughfares are trolley lined, of course, and a little beyond the town's centre is a common, a white wooden church stamping the place New England.

Lynn is made up of factories—great masses of ugliness, red brick, many-windowed buildings. The General Electric has a concern in this town, but the industry is chiefly the making of shoes. The shoe trade in our country is one of the highest paying manufactures, and in it there are more women employed than in any other trade. Lynn's population is 70,000; of these 10,000 work in shoe-shops.

The night must not find me homeless, houseless. I went first to a directory and found the address of

the Young Women's Christian Association: a room upstairs in a building on one of the principal streets. Here two women faced me as I made my appeal, and I saw at once displayed the sentiments of kindness thenceforth to greet me throughout my first experience—qualities of exquisite sympathy, rare hospitality and human interest.

"I am looking for work. I want to get a room in a safe place for the night."

I had not for a moment supposed that anything in my attire of simple decorous work-clothes could awaken pity. Yet pity it was and nothing less in the older woman's face.

"Work in the shops?"

"Yes, ma'am."

The simple fact that I was undoubtedly to make my own living and my own way in the hard hand-to-hand struggle in the shops aroused her sympathy.

She said earnestly: "You must not go anywhere to sleep that you don't know about, child."

She wrote an address for me on a slip of paper.

"Go there; I know the woman. If she can't take you, why, come back here. I'll take you to my own house. I won't have you sleep in a strange town just *anywheres!* You might get into trouble."

She was not a matron; she was not even one of the staff of managers or directors. She was only a woman who had come in to ask some question, receive some information; and thus in marvelous

friendliness she turned and outstretched her hand—I was a stranger and this was her welcome.

I had proved a point at the first step; help had been extended. If I myself failed to find shelter I could go to her for protection. I intended to find my lodging place if possible without any reference or any aid.

Out of the town proper in a quiet side street I saw a little wooden tenement set back from the road.

"Furnished Room to Rent," read the sign in the window. A sweet-faced woman responded to the bell I had rung. One glance at me and she said:

"Ve only got a 'sheep' room."

At the compliment I was ill-pleased and told her I was looking for a *cheap* room: I had come to Lynn to work. Oh! that was all right. That was the kind of people she received.

I followed her into the house. I must excuse her broken English. She was French. Ah! was she? That made my way easier. I told her I was from Paris and a stranger in this part of the country, and thenceforth our understanding was complete. In 28 Viger Street we spoke French always.

My room in the attic was blue-and-white papered; a little, clean, agreeable room.

Madam begged that I would pardon the fact that my bed had no sheets. She would try to arrange later. She also insinuated that the "young ladies" who boarded with her spoiled all her floor and her

furniture by slopping the water around. I assured her that she should not have to complain of me—I would take care.

The room was $1.25 a week. Could I pay her in advance? I did so, of course. I would have to carry up my water for washing from the first floor morning and night and care for my room. On the landing below I made arrangements with the tenant for board at ten cents a meal. Madame Courier was also a French Canadian, a mammoth creature with engaging manners.

"Mademoiselle Ballard has work?"

"Not yet."

"Well, if you don't get a job my husband will speak for you. I have here three other young ladies who work in the shops; they'll speak for you!"

Before the door of the first factory I failed miserably. I could have slunk down the street and gladly taken the first train away from Lynn! My garments were heavy; my skirt, lined with a sagging cotton goods, weighed a ton; the woolen gloves irritated.

The shop fronted the street, and the very sight through the window of the individuals representing power, the men whom I saw behind the desks, frightened me. I could not go in. I fairly ran through the streets, but stopped finally before a humbler shop—where a sign swung at the door:

"Hands Wanted." I went in here and opened a door on the third floor into a small office.

I was before a lank Yankee manufacturer. Leaning against his desk, twisting from side to side in his mouth a toothpick, he nodded to me as I entered. His wife, a grim, spectacled New Englander, sat in the revolving desk-chair.

"I want work. Got any?"

"Waal, thet's jist what we hev got! Ain't we, Mary?"

(I felt a flashing sensation of triumph.)

"Take your tippet off, set right down, ef you're in earnest."

"Oh, I am in earnest; but what sort of work is it?"

"It's gluein' suspender straps."

"Suspenders! I want to work in a shoe-shop!"

He smiled, indulgent of this whim.

"They all does! Don't they, Mary?" (She acquiesced.)

"Then they get sick of the shop, and they come back to me. You will!"

"Let me try the shoe-shop first; then if I can't get a job I'll come back."

He was anxious to close with me, however, and took up a pile of the suspender straps, tempting me with them.

"What you ever done?"

"Nothing. I'm green!"

"That don't make no difference; they're all green, ain't they, Mary?"

"Yes," Mary said; "I have to learn them all."

"Now, to Preston's you can get in all right, but you won't make over four dollars a week, and here if you're smart you'll make six dollars in no time." . . .

Preston's!

That was the first name I had heard, and to Preston's I was asking my way, stimulated by the fact, though I had been in Lynn not an hour and a half, a job was mine did I care to glue suspender straps!

I afterward learned that Preston's, a little factory on the town's outskirts, is a model shoe-shop in its way. I did not work there, and neither of the factories in which I was employed was "model" to my judgment.

A preamble at the office, where they suggested taking me in as office help:

"But I am green; I can't do office work."

Then Mr. Preston himself, working-director in drilling-coat, sat before me in his private office. I told him: "I want work badly——"

He had nothing—was, indeed, turning away hands; my evident disappointment had apparently impressed a man who was in the habit of refusing applicants for work.

"Look here"—he mitigated his refusal—"come

to-morrow at nine. I'm getting in a whole bale of cloth for cutting linings."

"You'll give me a chance, then?"

"Yes, I will!"

It was then proven that I could not starve in Lynn, nor wander houseless.

With these evidences of success, pride stirred. I determined before nightfall to be at work in a Lynn shoe-shop. It was now noon, streets filled with files and lines of freed operatives. Into a restaurant I wandered with part of the throng, and, with excitement and ambition for sauce, ate a good meal.

Factories had received back their workers when I applied anew. This time the largest building, one of the most important shops in Lynn, was my goal. At the door of Parsons' was a sign reading:

"*Wanted, Vampers.*"

A vamper I was not, but if any help was wanted there was hope. My demand for work was greeted at the office this time with—"Any signs out?"

"Yes."

(What they were I didn't deem it needful to say!) The stenographer nodded: "Go upstairs, then; ask the forelady on the fifth floor."

Through the big building and the shipping-room, where cases of shoes were being crated for the market, I went, at length really within a factory's walls. From the first to the fifth floor I went in an elevator—a freight elevator; there are no others.

of course. This lift was a terrifying affair; it shook and rattled in its shaft, shook and rattled in pitch darkness as it rose between "safety doors"—continuations of the building's floors. These doors open to receive the ascending elevator, then slowly close, in order that the shaft may be covered and the operatives in no danger of stepping inadvertently to sudden death.

I reached the fifth floor and entered into pandemonium. The workroom was in full working swing. At least five hundred machines were in operation and the noise was startling and deafening.

I made my way to a high desk where a woman stood writing. I knew her for the forelady by her "air"; nothing else distinguished her from the employees. No one looked up as I entered. I was nowhere a figure to attract attention; evidently nothing in my voice or manner or aspect aroused supposition that I was not of the class I simulated.

Now, into my tone, as I spoke to the forelady bending over her account book, I put all the force I knew. I determined she should give me something to do! Work was everywhere: some of it should fall to my hand.

"Say, I've got to work. Give me anything, anything; I'm green."

She didn't even look at me, but called—shrieked, rather—above the machine din to her colleagues:

"Got anything for a green hand?"

The person addressed gave me one glance, the sole and only look I got from any one in authority in Parsons'.

"Ever worked in a shoe-shop before?"

"No, ma'am."

"I'll have you learned *pressin'*; we need a *presser*. Go take your things off, then get right down over there."

I tore off my outside garment in the cloak-room, jammed full of hats and coats. I was obliged to stack my belongings in a pile on the dirty floor.

Now hatless, shirt-waisted, I was ready to labour amongst the two hundred bond-women around me. Excitement quite new ran through me as I went to the long table indicated and took my seat. My object was gained. I had been in Lynn two hours and a half and was a working-woman.

On my left the seat was vacant; on my right Maggie McGowan smiled at me, although, poor thing, she had small cause to welcome the green hand who demanded her time and patience. She was to "learn me pressin'," and she did.

Before me was a board, black with stains of leather, an awl, a hammer, a pot of foulest-smelling glue, and a package of piece-work, ticketed. The branch of the trade I learned at Parsons' was as follows:

Before me was outspread a pile of bits of leather foxings, back straps, vamps, etc. Dipping my brush

in the glue, I gummed all the extreme outer edges. When the "case" had been gummed, the first bits were dry, then the fingers turned down the gummed edges of the leather into fine little seams; these seams are then plaited with the awl and the ruffled hem flattened with the hammer—this is "pressing." The case goes from presser to the seaming machine.

The instruments turn in my awkward fingers. I spread glue where it should not be: edges designated for its reception remain innocent. All this means double work later. "*Twict the work!*" my teacher remarks. Little by little, however, the simplicity of the manual action, the uniformity, the mechanical movement declare themselves. I glance from time to time at my expert neighbours, compare our work; in an hour I have mastered the method—skill and rapidity can be mine only after many days; but I worked alone, unaided.

As raw edges, at first defying my clumsiness, fell to fascinating rounds, as the awl creased the leather into the fluting folds, as the hammer mashed the gummed seam down, I enjoyed the process; it was kindergarten and feminine toil combined, not too hard; but it was only the beginning!

Meanwhile my teacher, patient-faced, lightning-fingered, sat close to me, reeking perspiration, tired with the ordeal of instructing a greenhorn. With no sign of exhausted patience, however, she gummed my vamps with the ill-smelling glue.

"This glue makes lots of girls sick! In the other shops where I worked they just got sick, one by one, and quit. I stuck it out. The forelady said to me when I left: 'My! I never thought anybody could stand it's long's you have.' "

I asked, "What would you rather do than this?"

She didn't seem to know.

"I don't do this for fun, though! Nor do you—I bet you!"

(I didn't—but not quite for her reason.)

As I had yet my room to make sure of, I decided to leave early. I told Maggie McGowan I was going home.

"Tired already?" There was still an hour to dark.

As I explained to her my reasons she looked at my amateur accomplishment spread on the board before us. I had only pressed a case of shoes—three dozen pairs.

"I guess I'll have to put it on my card," she soliloquized, " 'cause I learned you."

"Do—do——"

"It's only about seven cents, anyway."

"Three hours' work and that's all I've made?" *

She regarded me curiously, to see how the amount tallied with my hope of gain and wealth.

"Yet you tell me I'm not stupid. How long have you been at it?"

* An expert presser can do as many as 400 shoes a day. This is rare and maximum.

"LEARNING" A NEW HAND

Miss P., an experienced "gummer" on vamp linings, is a New England girl, and makes $8 or $9 a week. The new hand makes from $2.50 to $3 a week at the same work

"Ten years."

"And you make?"

"Well, I don't want to discourage you." . . .

(If Maggie used this expression once she used it a dozen times; it was her pat on the shoulder, her word of cheer before coming ill news.)

". . . I don't want to discourage you, but it's slow! I make about twelve dollars a week."

"Then I will make four!"

(Four? Could it be possible I dreamed of such sums at this stage of ignorance!)

"*I don't want to discourage you*, but I guess you'd better do housework!"

It was clear, then, that for weeks I was to drop in with the lot of women wage-earners who make under five dollars a week for ten hours a day labour.

"Why don't *you* do housework, Maggie?"

"I do. I get up at five and do all the work of our house, cook breakfast, and clean up before I come to the shop. I eat dinner here. When I go home at night I get supper and tidy up!"

My expression as I fell to gumming foxings was not pity for my own fate, as she, generous creature, took it to be.

"After you've been here a few years," she said, "you'll make more than I do. I'm not smart. You'll beat me."

Thus with tact she told me bald truth, and yet had not discouraged!

Novel situations, long walks hither and thither through Lynn, stairs climbed, and three hours of intense application to work unusual were tiring indeed. Nevertheless, as I got into my jacket and put on my hat in the suffocation of the cloak-room I was still under an exhilarating spell. I belonged, for time never so little, to the giant machine of which the fifth floor of Parsons' is only an infinitesimal humming, singing part. I had earned seven cents! Seven cents of the $4,000,000 paid to Lynn shoe employees were mine. I had bought the right to one piece of bread by the toil of my unskilled labour. As I fastened my tippet of common black fur and drew on my woolen gloves, the odour from my glue- and leather-stained hands came pungent to my nostrils. Friends had said to me: "Your hands will betray you!" If the girls at my side in Parsons' thought anything about the matter they made no such sign as they watched my fingers swiftly lose resemblance to those of the leisure class under the use of instruments and materials damning softness and beauty from a woman's hands.

Yet Maggie had her sensitiveness on this subject. I remarked once to her: "I don't see how you manage to keep your hands so clean. Mine are twice as black." She coloured, was silent for a time, then said: "I never want anybody to speak to me of my hands. I'm ashamed of 'em; they used to be real nice, though." She held the blunted

ends up. "They're awful! I do love a nice hand."

The cold struck sharp as a knife as I came out of the factory. Fresh air, insolent with purity, cleanness, unusedness, smiting nostrils, sought lungs filled too long with unwholesome atmosphere.*

Heated by a brisk walk home, I climbed the stairs to my attic room, as cold as Greenland. It was nearly six thirty, supper hour, and I made a shift at a toilet.

Into the kitchen I was the last comer. All of the supper not on the table was on the stove, and between this red-hot buffet and the supper table was just enough room for the landlady to pass to and fro as she waited upon her nine guests.

No sooner did I open the door into the smoky atmosphere, into the midst of the little world here assembled, than I felt the quick kindness of welcome.

My place was at the table's end, before the Irish stew.

"Miss Ballard!" The landlady put her arm about my waist and introduced me, mentioning the names of every one present. There were four women besides myself and four men.

"I don't want Miss Ballard to feel strange," said my hostess in her pretty Canadian *patois*. "I want her to be at home here."

I sat down.

*At Plant's, Boston, fresh air cylinders ventilate the shop.

"Oh, she'll be at home all right!" A frowzy-headed, pretty brunette from the table's other end raised kind eyes to me and nodded a smiling good-fellowship.

"Come to work in the shops?"

"Yes."

"Ever been to Lynn before?"

"No; live in Paris—stranger."

"My, but that's hard—all alone here! Got a job?"

"Yes."

And I explained to the attentive interest of all.

From the Irish stew before me they helped themselves, or passed to me the plates from the distance. If excitement had not taken from me every shred of appetite, the kitchen odours, smoke and frying, the room's stifling heat would have dulled hunger.

Let it go! I was far too interested to eat.

The table was crowded with all manner of substances passing for food—cheese, preserves, onion pickles, cake and Irish stew, all eaten at one time and at will; the drink was tea.

At my left sat a well-dressed man who would pass anywhere for a business man of certain distinction. He was a common operator. Next him was a bridal couple, very young and good looking; then came the sisters, Mika and Nannette, their brother, a packer at a shop, then Mademoiselle

Frances, expert hand at fourteen dollars a week (a heavy swell indeed), then Maurice.

Although I was evidently an object of interest, although countless questions were put to me, let me say that curiosity was markedly absent. Their attitude was humane, courteous, sympathetic, agreeable, which qualities I firmly believe are supreme in those who know hardship, who suffer privation, who labour.

Great surprise was evinced that I had so soon found a job. Mika and Nannette, brunette Canadians, with voices sweet and carrying, talked in good English and mediocre French.

"It's wonderful you got a job right off! Ain't she in luck! Why, most has to get spoken of weeks in advance—introduced by friends, too!"

Mika said: "My name's been up two months at my sister's shop. The landlady told us about your coming, Miss Ballard. We was going to speak for you to our foreladies."

Here my huge hostess, who during my stay stood close to my side as though she thought I needed her motherliness, put her hand on my shoulder.

"Yes, *mon enfant*, we didn't want you to get discouraged in a strange place. *Ici nous sommes toute une famille.*"

"All one family?" Oh, no, no, kind creature, hospitable receiver of a stranger, not all one family! I belong to the class of the woman who, one day by

chance out of her carriage, did she happen to sit by your side in a cable car, would pull her dress from the contact of your clothes, heavy with tenement odours; draw back as you crushed your huge form down too close to her; turn no look of sisterhood to your face, brow-bound by the beads of sweat, its signet of labour.

Not one family! I am one with the hostess, capable even of greeting her guest with insolent discourtesy did such a one chance to intrude at an hour when her presence might imperil the next step of the social climber's ladder.

Not one family, but part of the class whose tongues turn the *truffle* buried in *pate de foie gras;* whose lips are reddened with Burgundies and cooled with iced champagnes; who discuss the quality of a *canard a la presse* throughout a meal; who have no leisure, because they have no labour such as you know the term to mean; who create disease by feeding bodies unstimulated by toil, whilst you, honestly tired, really hungry, eat Irish stew in the atmosphere of your kitchen dining-hall.

Not one family, I blush to say! God will not have it so.

The Irish stew had all disappeared, every vestige.

"But mademoiselle eats nothing—a bird's appetite." And here was displayed the first hint of vulgarity we are taught to look for in the other class.

She put her hands about my arms. "*Tiens! un*

bras tout de meme!" and she looked at Maurice, the young man on my right.

"*Maurice c'est toi qui devrait t'informer des bras d'mademoiselle.*"

("Maurice, it is you who should inform yourself of mademoiselle's arms.")

Maurice laughed with appreciation, as did the others. He was the sole American at table; out of courtesy for him we talked English from time to time, although he assured us he understood all we said in "the jargon."

. . . . . .

To Maurice a master pen could do justice; none other. His *type* is seen stealing around corners in London's Whitechapel and in the lowest quarters of New York: a lounger, indolent, usually drunk. Maurice was the type, with the qualities absent. Tall, lank, loosely hung together, made for muscular effort, he wore a dark flannel shirt, thick with grease and oil stains, redolent with tobacco, a checked waistcoat, no collar or cravat. From the collarless circle of his shirt rose his strong young neck and bullet head; his forehead was heavy and square below the heavy brows; his black eyes shone deep sunken in their caverns.

His black hair, stiff as a brush, came low on his forehead; his mouth was large and sensual, his teeth brilliant. But his hands! never to be forgotten! Scrubbed till flesh might well have parted from the

bones! clean, even if black and mutilated with toil; fingers forever darkened; stained ingrained ridges rising around the nails, hard and ink-black as leather. Maurice was Labour — its Symbol — its Epitome.

At the landlady's remark he had blushed and addressed me frankly:

"Say, I work to de 'Lights.'"

(Lights! Can such a word be expressive of the factory which has daily blackened and scarred and dulled this human instrument?)

"To the 'Lights,' and it ain't no *cinch*, I can tell you! I got to keep movin'. Every minute I'm late I get docked for wages—it's a day's work to the 'Lights.' When *she* calls me at six—why, I don't turn over and snooze another! I just turn right out. I walk two miles to my shop—and every man in his place at 6:45! Don't you forgit it!"

He cleaned his plate of food.

"I jest keep movin' all de time."

He wiped his mouth—rose unceremoniously, put on his pot-like derby ajaunt, lit a vile cigar, slipped into a miserable old coat, and was gone, the odour of his weed blending its new smell with kitchen fumes.

He is one of the absolutely real creatures I have ever seen. Of his likeness types of crime are drawn. Maurice—blade keen-edged, hidden in its battered sheath, its ugly case—terrible yet attractive speci-

men of strength and endurance—Youth and Manhood in you are bound to labour as on the rack, and in the ordeal you keep (as does the mass of humanity) Silence!

Eat by this man's side, heap his plate with coarse victuals, feel the touch of his flannel sleeve against your own flannel blouse, see his look of brotherhood as he says:

"Say, if de job dey give you is too hard, why, I guess I kin get yer in to the 'Lights'!"

These are sensations facts alone can give.

. . . . . .

After dinner we sit all together in the parlour, the general living-room: carpet-covered sofa, big table, few chairs—that's all. We talk an hour—and on what? We discuss Bernhardt, the divine Sarah. "Good shows don't come to Lynn much; it don't pay them. You can't get more than fifty cents a seat. Now Bernhardt don't like to act for fifty-cent houses! But the theatres are crowded if ever there's a good show. We get tired of the awful poor shows to the Opera House." Maude Adams was a favourite. Réjane had been seen. Of course, the vital American interest—money—is touched upon, let me say lightly, and passed. The packer at Rigger's, intelligent and well-informed and well-read, discoursed in good French about English and French politics and on the pleasure it would be to travel and see the world.

At nine, friendly handshaking. "Good-night. You're tired. You'll like it all right to the shops, see if you don't! You'll make money, too. The forelady must a-seen that you were ambitious. Why, to my shop when a new hand applies for a job the foreman asks: 'What does he look like? Ambitious lookin'? Well, then—there's room."

Ambitious to make shoes! To grind out all you can above the average five dollars a week, all you may by conscientious, unflagging work during 224 hours out of a month.

Good-night to the working world! Landlady and friendly co-labourers.

"*Il ne faut pas vous gener, mademoiselle; nous sommes toute une famille.*"

Upstairs in my room the excitement died quite out of me. I lay wakeful in the hard, sheetless bed. It was cold, my window-pane freezing rapidly. I could not sleep. On either side, through the thin walls of the house, I could hear my neighbours settling to repose. Maurice's room was next to mine. He whistled a short snatch of a topical song as he undressed. On the other side slept the landlady's children; opposite, the packer from Rigger's. The girls' room was downstairs. When Maurice's song had reached its close he heaved a profound sigh, and then followed silence, as slumber claimed the sole period of his existence not devoted to work. The tenement soon passed to stillness complete.

Before six the next morning—black as night—the call: "Mau—rice! Mau—*rice!*" rang through the hall. Summons to us all, given through him on whom the exigencies of life fell the heaviest. Maurice worked by day system—the rest of us were freed men and women by comparison.

The night before, timid and reluctant to descend the two flights of pitch dark stairs with a heavy water-pitcher in my hand, I had brought up no water! It is interesting to wonder how scrupulous we would all be if our baths were carried up and down two flights of stairs pitcher by pitcher. A little water nearly frozen was at hand for my toilet. By six I was dressed and my bed made; by 6:15 in the kitchen, dense with smoke from the frying breakfast. Through the haze the figures of my friends declared themselves. Codfish balls, bread and butter and coffee formed the repast.

Maurice is the first to finish, standing a moment to light his pipe, his hat acock; then he is gone. The sisters wash at the sink, Mika combing her mass of frowzy dark hair, talking meanwhile. The sisters' toilet, summary and limited, is frankly displayed.

At my right the bride consumes five enormous fish balls, as well as much bread. Her husband, a young, handsome, gentle creature, eats sparingly. His hand is strapped up at the wrist.

"What's wrong?"

"Strained tendons. Doctor says they'd be all

right if I could just hold up a little. They don't get no chance to rest."

"But why not 'hold up' awhile?" He regards me sympathetically as one who says to an equal, a fellow: "You know why!—for the same reason that you yourself will work sick or well."

"*On fait ce que l'on peut!*"

("One does one's best!")

When the young couple had left the room our landlady said:

"The little woman eats well, doesn't she! She needs no tonic! All day long she sits in my parlour and rocks—and rocks."

"She does nothing?"

Madame shrugged.

"But yes! She reads novels!"

It was half-past six when I got into the streets. The midwinter sky is slowly breaking to dawn. The whole town white with fresh snow, and still half-wedded to night, is nevertheless stirring to life.

I become, after a block or two, one of a hurrying throng of labour-bound fellows—dark forms appear from streets and avenues, going in divers directions toward their homes. Homes? Where one passes most of one's life, is it not *Home?*

These figures to-day bend head and shoulders against the wind as it blows neck-coverings about, forces bare hands into coat pockets.

By the time the town has been traversed, railroad

THE WINDOW SIDE OF MISS K.'S PARLOUR AT LYNN, MASS.

track crossed, and Parsons' in sight, day has nearly broken. Pink clouds float over factory roofs in a sky growing bluer, flushing to day.

From now on the day is shut out for those who here and there enter the red-brick factories. An hour at noon? Of course, this magnificent hour is theirs! . Time to eat, time to feed the human machine. One hour in which to stretch limbs, to pull to upright posture the bent body. Meanwhile daylight progresses from glowing beauty to high noon, and there the acme of brilliance seems to pause, as freed humanity stares half-blinded at God's midday rest.

All the remaining hours of daylight are for the leisure world. Not till night claims Lynn shall the factory girl be free.

Ascending the five flights of dirty stairs, my steps fell side by side those of a young workman in drilling coat. He gave me a good-morning in a cheery tone.

"Working here? Got it good?"

"I guess so."

"That's all right. Good-day."

Therefore I began my first labour day with a good wish from my new class!

On the fifth floor I was one of the very first arrivals. If in the long, low-ceiled room windows had been opened, the flagging air gave no sign to the effect. It was fetid and cold. Daylight had not

fully found the workshop, gas was lit, and no work prepared. I was eager to begin, but was forced to wait before idle tools till work was given me—hard ordeal for ambitious piece-worker. At the tick of seven, however, I had begun my branch of the shoe-making trade. One by one my mates arrived; the seats beyond me and on either side were filled.

Opposite me sat a ghost of girlhood. A tall, slender creature, cheeks like paper, eyes sunken. She, too, had the smile of good-fellowship—coin freely passed from workwoman to workwoman.

This girl's job was filthy. She inked edges of the shoes with a brush dipped in a pot of thick black fluid. Pile after pile of piece-work was massed in front of her; pile by pile disappeared. She worked like lightning.

"Do you like your job?" I ventured. This seemed to be the open sesame to all conversations in the shops. She shrugged her narrow shoulders but made no direct reply. "I used to have what you're doing; it's awful. That glue made me sick. I was in bed. So when I came back I got *this*." She was separated from my glue-pot by a table's length only.

"But don't you smell it from here?"

"Not so bad; this here" (pointing to her black fluid) "smells stronger; it *drownds* it.

"I make my wages clear," she announced to me a few minutes later.

"How do you mean?"

"Why, at noon I wait in a restaurant; they give me my dinner afterward. I go back there and wait on the table at supper, too. My vittles don't cost me anything!"

So that is where your golden noon hour is spent, standing, running, waiting, serving in the ill-smelling restaurant I shall name later; and not your dinner hour alone, but the long day's fag end!

"I ain't from these parts," she continued, confidentially, "I'm down East. I used to run a machine, but it hurts my side."

My job went well for an amateur. I finished one case of shoes (thirty-six pairs) in little more than an hour. By ten o'clock the room grew stifling hot. I was obliged to discard my dress skirt and necktie, loosen collar, roll up my sleeves. My warmer blooded companions did the like. It was singular to watch the clock mark out the morning hours, and at ten, already early, very early in the forenoon, feel tired because one had been three hours at work.

A man came along with nuts and apples in a basket to sell. I bought an apple for five cents. It was regarded by my teacher, Maggie, as a prodigal expenditure! I shared it with her, and she in turn shared her half with her neighbours, advising me wisely.

"Say, you'd better *earn* an apple before you buy one!"

My companion on the other side was a pretty country girl. She regarded her work with good-humoured indifference; indeed, her labour was of very indifferent quality. I don't believe she was ever intended to make shoes. In a cheerful undertone she sang topical songs the morning long. It drove Maggie McGowan "mad," so she said.

"Say, why don't some of *youse* sing?" said the little creature, looking down our busy line. "I never hear no singing in the shops."

Maggie said, "Sing! Well, I don't come here to sing."

The other laughed sweetly.

"Well, I jest have to sing."

"You seem happy; are you?" She looked at me out of her pretty blue eyes.

"You bet! That's the way to be!" Then after a little, in an aside to me alone, she whispered:

"Not always. Sometimes I cry all to myself.

"See the sun?" she exclaimed, lifting her head. (It shone golden through the window's dirty, cloudy pane.) "He's peekin' at me! He'll find *you* soon. Looks like he was glad to see us sitting here!"

Sun, friend, light, air, seek them—seek them! Pour what tide of pure gold you may in through the sullied pane; touch, caress the bowed heads at the clicking machines! Shine on the dusty, untidy hair! on the bowed shoulders! on the flying hands!

At noon I made a reluctant concession to wisdom

and habit. Unwilling to thwart my purposes and collapse from sheer fatigue, at the dinner hour I went to a restaurant and ordered a meal in keeping with my appetite. I had never been so hungry. I almost wept with joy when the chicken and cranberry and potato appeared. Never was sauce more poignant than that which seasoned the only real repast I had in Lynn.

The hours from one to three went fairly well, but by 3:30 I was tired out, my fingers had grown wooden with fatigue, glue-pot and folding-line, board, hammer and awl had grown indistinct. It was hard-to continue. The air stifled. Odours conspired together. Oil, leather, glue (oh, that to-heaven-smelling glue!), tobacco smoke, humanity.

. . . . . .

Maggie asked me, "How old do I look?" I gave her thirty. Twenty-five it seemed she was. In guessing the next girl's age no better luck. "It's this," Maggie nodded to the workroom; "it takes it out of you! Just you wait till you've worked ten years in Lynn."

Ten years! Heaven forbid! Already I could have rushed from the factory, shaken its dust from my feet, and with hands over ears shut out the horrid din that inexorably cried louder than human speech.

Everything we said was shrieked in the friendly ear bent close.

Although Maggie McGowan was curious about me, in posing her questions she was courtesy itself.

"Say," to her neighbour, "where do you think Miss Ballard's from? Paris!"

My neighbour once-removed leaned forward to stare at me. "My, but that's a change to Lynn! Ain't it? Now don't you think you'll miss it?"

She fell to work again, and said after a little: "Paris! Why, that's like a dream. Is it like real places? I can't never guess what it is like!"

The girl at the machine next mine had an ear like a sea-shell, a skin of satin. Her youth was bound, strong shoulders already stooped, chest fast narrowing. At 7 A. M. she came: albeit fresh, pale still and wan; rest of the night too short a preparation for the day's work. By three in the afternoon she was flushed, by five crimson. She threw her hands up over her head and exclaimed: "My back's broke, and I've only made thirty-five cents to-day."

Maggie McGowan (indicating me): "Here's a girl who's had the misfortune never to work in a shoe-shop."

"*Misfortune?* You don't mean that!"

Maggie: "Well, I guess I don't! If I didn't make a joke now and then I'd jump into the river!"

She sat close to me patiently directing my clumsy fingers.

"Why do you speak so strongly? 'Jump into the river!' That's saying a lot!"

"I am sick of the shoe-shops."

"How long have you been at this work?"

"Ten years. When you have worked ten years in Lynn you will be sick of the shops."

I was sick of the shops, and I had not worked ten years. And for my hard-toiling future, such as she imagined that it would be, I could see that she pitied me. Once, supposing that since I am so green and so ill-clad, and so evidently bent on learning my trade the best I knew, she asked me in a voice quick with sisterhood:

"Say, are you hungry?"

"No, no, no."

"You'll be all right! No American girl need to starve in America."

In the shops the odours are more easily endured than is the noise. All conversation is shrieked out, and all the vision that one has as one lifts one's eyes from time to time is a sky seen through dirty window-panes, distant chimney-pots, and the roof-lines of like houses of toil.

. . . . . .

I gathered this from our interrupted talk that flowed unceasingly despite the noise of our hammers and the noise of the general room.

They worked at a trade uncongenial. Not one had a good word to say for shop-labour there, despite its advantages, in this progressive land of generous pay. Each woman in a narrow, touching degree

was a dreamer. Housework! too servile; but then, compared to shopwork it was leisure.

By four the gas was lit here and there where burners were available. Over our heads was no arrangement for lighting. We bent lower in semi-obscurity. In the blending of twilight and gaslight the room became mysterious, a shadowy corridor. Figures grew indistinct, softened and blurred. The exhausted air surrounded the gas jets in misty circles.

Unaltered alone was the ceaseless thud, the chopping, pounding of the machinery, the long soughing of the power-engine.

Here and there a woman stops to rest a second, her head sunk in her hand; or she rises, stretches limbs and body. A man wanders in from the next room, a pipe in his mouth, or a bad cigar, and pausing by one of the pale operators, whose space of rest is done, he flings down in front of her a new pile of piece-work from the cutting machines.

We are up five flights of stairs. There are at least two hundred girls. Machine oil, rags, refuse, cover the floor—such *dèbris* as only awaits a spark from a lighted match or cigar to burst into flames. Despite laws and regulations the building is not fire-proof. There is no fire-escape. A cry of fire, and great Heaven! what escape for two hundred of us from this mountain height, level with roofs of the distant town!

Thus these women, shapes mysterious in gaslight and twilight, labour: life is at stake; health, youth, vigour, supply little more than bread. I rise; my bruised limbs, at first numb, then aching, stir for the first time after five hours of steady work. The pile of shoes before me is feeble evidence of the last hours' painful effort.

I get into my clothes—skirt, jacket and hat, all impregnated now with factory and tenement odours, and stumble downstairs and out into the street. I have earned fifty cents to-day—but then, I am green!

When once more in the cool, fresh air, released, I draw in a long and grateful breath.

Lynn on this winter night is a snow-bound, midwinter village. In the heavens is the moon's ghost, a mist-shrouded, far-away disk. But it is the Christmas moon, shining on the sleeping thousands in the town, where night alone is free. The giant factories are silent, the machines at last quiet, the long workrooms moon-invaded. Labour is holy, but serfdom is accursed, and toil which demands that every hour of daylight should be spent in the race for existence—all of the daylight—is kin to slavery! There is no time for mental or physical upright-standing, no time for pleasure.

. . . . . .

One day I decided to consider myself dismissed from Parsons'. They had taught me all they could,

unless I changed my trade, in that shop; I wished to learn a new one in another. Therefore, one morning I applied at another factory, again one of the largest in Lynn. The sign read:

"Cleaner Wanted!"

"Cleaner" sounded easy to learn. My experience this time was with a foreman instead of a forelady. The workroom I sought was on the second floor, a room filled with men, all of them standing. Far down the room's centre I saw the single figure of a woman at her job. By her side I was soon to be, and we two the sole women on the second floor.

The foreman was distinctly a personage. Small, kind, alive, he wore a straw hat and eye-glasses. He had decided in a moment that my short application for "something to do" was not to be gainsaid.

"Ever worked before?"

This time I had a branch of a trade at my fingers' ends.

"Yes, sir; presser."

I was proud of my trade.

I did not even know, as I do now, that "cleaning" is the filthiest job the trade possesses. It is in bad repute and difficult to secure a woman to do the unpleasant work.

"You come with me," he said cheerfully; "I'll teach you."

The forelady at Parsons' did not know whether I

worked well or not. She never came to see. The foreman in Marches' taught me himself.

Two high desks, like old-time school desks, rose in the workshop's centre. Behind one of these I stood, whilst the foreman in front of me instructed my ignorance. The room was filled with high crates rolled hither and thither on casters. These crates contained anywhere from thirty-two to fifty pairs of boots. The cases are moved from operator to operator as each man selects the shoes to apply to them the especial branch of his trade. From the crate of boots rolled to my side I took four boots and placed them on the desk before me. With the heel of one pressed against my breast, I dipped my fore-finger in a glass of hot soap and water, water which soon became black as ink. I passed my wet, soapy finger all around the boot's edges, from toe to heel. This loosened, in the space between the sole and vamp, the sticky dye substance on the leather and particles so-called "dirt." Then with a bit of wood covered with Turkish toweling I scraped the shoe between the sole and vamp and with a third cloth polished and rubbed the boot clean. In an hour's time I did one-third as well as my companion. I cleaned a case in an hour, whilst she cleaned three.

When my employer had left me I observed the woman at my side: an untidy, degraded-looking creature, long past youth. Her hands beggared description; their covering resembled skin not at

all, but a dark-blue substance, leatherlike, bruised, ingrained, indigo-hued. Her nails looked as though they had been beaten severely. One of her thumbs was bandaged.

"I lost one nail; rotted off."

"Horrible! How, pray?"

"That there water: it's poison from the shoe-dye."

Swiftly my hands were changing to a faint likeness of my companion's.

"Don't tell him," she said, "that I told you that. He'll be mad; he'll think I am discouraging you. But you'll lose your forefinger nail, all right!" Then she gave a little laugh as she turned her boot around to polish it.

"Once I tried to clean my hands up. Lord! it's no good! I scrub 'em with a scrubbin'-brush on Sundays."

"How long have you been at this job?"

"Ten months."

They called her "Bobby"; the men from their machines nodded to her now and then, bantering her across the noise of their wheels. She was ignorant of it, too stupid to know whether life took her in sport or in earnest! The men themselves worked in their flannel shirts. Not far from us was a wretchedly ill-looking individual, the very shadow of manhood. I observed that once he cast toward us a look of interest. Under my feet was a raised platform on which I stood, bending to my work. During the

morning the consumptive man strolled over and whispered something to "Bobby." He made her dullness understand. When he had gone back to his job she said to me:

"Say, w'y don't yer push that platform away and stand down on the floor? You're too tall to need that. It makes yer bend."

"Did that man come over to tell you this?"

"Yes. He said it made you tired."

From my work, across the room, I silently blessed the pale old man, bowed, thin, pitiful, over the shoe he held, obscured from me by the cloud of sawdust-like flying leather that spun scattered from the sole he held to the flying wheel.

. . . . . .

I don't believe the shoe-dye really to be poisonous. I suppose it is scarcely possible that it can be so; but the constant pressure against forefinger nail is enough to induce disease. My fingers were swollen sore. The effects of the work did not leave my hands for weeks.

"Bobby" was not talkative or communicative simply because she had nothing to say. Over and over again she repeated the one single question to me during the time I worked by her side: "Do you like your job?" and although I varied my replies as well as I could with the not too exhausting topic she offered, I could not induce her to converse. She took no interest in my work, absorbed in her own.

Every now and then she would compute the sum she had made, finally deciding that the day was to be a red-bean day and she would make a dollar and fifty cents. During the time we worked together she had cleaned seventeen cases of shoes.

In this shop it was hotter than in Parsons'. We sweltered at our work. Once a case of shoes was cleaned, I wrote my initial "B" on the tag and rolled the crate across the floor to the man next me, who took it into his active charge.

The foreman came to me many times to inspect, approve and encourage. He was a model teacher and an indefatigable superintendent. Just how far personal, and just how far human, his kindness, who can say?

"You've been a presser long at the shoe-shops?"

"No."

"I like your pluck. When a girl has never had to work, and takes hold the way you do, I admire it. You will get along all right."

"Thank you; perhaps I won't, though."

"Now, don't get nervous. I am nervous myself," he said; "I know how that is."

On his next visit he asked me: "Where you goin' to when you get out of here to-night?"

I told him that I was all right—that I had a place to stay.

"If you're hard up, don't get discouraged; come to me."

"FANCY GUMMING"

Mrs. T earns $8 or $10 a week. Her husband also works in a factory, and between them they have made enough to build a pretty little cottage

AN ALL-ROUND, EXPERIENCED HAND

Mrs. F., who has worked in the factory more than twenty years, once as a forewoman, now earns only $5 or $6 a week

I thanked him again and said that I could not take charity."

"Nonsense! I don't call it charity! If I was hard put, don't you s'pose I'd go to the next man if he offered me what I offer you? The world owes you a livin'."

When the foreman had left me I turned to look at "Bobby." She was in the act of lifting to her lips a glass of what was supposed to be water.

"You're not going to drink that!" I gasped, horrified. "Where did you get it?"

"Oh, I drawed it awhile ago," she said.

It had stood gathering microbes in the room, visible ones evidently, for a scum had formed on the glass that looked like stagnant oil. She blew the stuff back and drank long. Her accent was so bad and her English so limited I took her to be a foreigner beyond doubt. She proved to be an American. She had worked in factories all her life, since she was eight years old, and her brain was stunted.

At dinner time, when I left Marches', I had stood, without sitting down once, for five hours, and according to Bobby's computation I had made the large sum of twenty-five cents, having cleaned a little more than one hundred shoes. To all intents, at least for the moment, my hands were ruined. At Weyman's restaurant I went in with my fellow workwomen and men.

Weyman's restaurant smells very like the steerage

in a vessel. The top floor having burned out a few weeks before, the ceiling remained blackened and filthy. The place was so close and foul-smelling that eating was an ordeal. If I had not been so famished, it would have been impossible for me to swallow a mouthful. I bought soup and beans, and ate, in spite of the inconveniences, ravenously, and paid for my dinner fifteen cents. Most of my neighbours took one course, stew or soup. I rose half-satisfied, dizzy from the fumes and the bad air. I am safe in saying that I never smelled anything like to Weyman's, and I hope never to again. Never again shall I hear food and drink discussed by the *gourmet* —discuss, indeed, with him over his repast—but there shall rise before me Weyman's restaurant, low-ceiled, foul, crowded to overflowing. I shall see the diners bend edged appetites to the unpalatable food. These Weyman patrons, mark well, are the rich ones, the swells of labour—able to squander fifteen to twenty cents on their stew and tea. There are dozens, you remember, still in the unaired fourth and fifth stories—at "lunching" over their sandwiches. Far more vivid, more poignant even must be to me the vision of "Bobby." I shall see her eat her filthy sandwich with her blackened hands, see her stoop to blow the scum of deadly matter from her typhoid-breeding glass.

. . . . . .

In Lynn, unless she boards at home, a girl's living

costs her at best $3.75 a week. If she be of the average* her month's earnings are $32. Reduce this by general expenses and living and her surplus is $16, to earn which she has toiled 224 hours. You will recall that there are, out of the 22,000 operatives in Massachusetts, 5,000 who make under $5 a week. I leave the reader to compute from this the luxuries and possible pleasures consistent with this income.

A word for the swells of the trade, for swells exist. One of my companions at 28 Viger Street made $14 a week. Her expenses were $4; she therefore had at her disposition about $40 a month. She had no family—*every cent of her surplus she spent on her clothes.*

"I like to look down and see myself dressed nice," she said; "it makes me feel good. I don't like myself in poor clothes."

She *was* well-dressed—her furs good, her hat charming. We walked to work side by side, she the lady of us. Of course she belongs to the Union. Her possible illness is provided for; her death will bring $100 to a distant cousin. She is only tired out, thin, undeveloped, pale, that's all. She is almost a capitalist, and extremely well dressed.

Poor attire, if I can judge by the reception I met with in Lynn, influences only those who by reason of birth, breeding and education should be above such things. In Viger Street I was more simply

*Lynn's average wages are $8 per week.

clad than my companions. My aspect called forth only sisterhood and kindness.

Fellowship from first to last, fellowship from their eyes to mine, a spark kindled never to be extinguished. The morning I left my tenement lodging Mika took my hand at the door.

"Good-by." Her eyes actually filled. "I'm awful sorry you're going. If the world don't treat you good come back to us."

I must qualify a little. One member of the working class there was on whom my cheap clothes had a chilling effect—the spoiled creature of the traveling rich, a Pullman car porter on the train from Boston to New York! Although I called him first and purposely gave him my order in time, he viewed me askance and served me the last of all. As I watched my companions in their furs and handsome attire eat, whilst I sat and waited, my woolen gloves folded in my lap, I wondered if any one of the favoured was as hungry, as famished as the presser from Parsons', the cleaner from Marches'.

THE SOUTHERN COTTON MILLS

CHAPTER VIII

The Southern Cotton Mills

THE MILL VILLAGE

Columbia, South Carolina, of course is conscious that there are mills without its city precincts. It is proud of the manufacture that gives the city precedence and commercial value all over the world. The trolley runs to the mills empty, as a rule, after the union depot is passed.

Frankly, what is there to be seen in these dusty suburbs? Entry to the mills themselves is difficult, if not absolutely impossible. And that which forms the background for the vast buildings, the Mill Village, is a section to be shunned like the plague. Plague is not too strong a word to apply to the pest-ridden, epidemic-filled, filthy settlement where in this part of the country the mill-hand lives, moves and has his being, horrible honeycomb of lives, shocking morals and decency.

Around Columbia there lie five mills and their respective settlements — Excelsior, the Granton, Calcutta, the Richland and the Capital City. Each of these mills boasts its own so-called town. When

these people are free on Saturday afternoon and Sunday they are too exhausted to do anything but turn into their hovels to sleep. At most on Saturday afternoons or Sundays they board a trolley and betake themselves to a distant park which, in the picturesque descriptions of Columbia, reads like an Arcadia and is in reality desolation.

The mill-hands are not from the direct section of Columbia. They are strangers brought in from "the hills" by the agents of the company; who go hither and thither through the different parts of the country describing to the poor whites and the hill dwellers work in the mills as a way to riches and success. Filled with dreams of gain and possessions, with hopes of decent housing and schooling for their children, they leave their distant communities and troop to the mills. These immigrants are picturesque, touching to see. They come with all they own in the world on their backs or in their hands; penniless; burrs and twigs often in the hair of the young girls. They are hatless, barefooted, ignorant; innocent for the most part—and hopeful! What the condition of these labourers is after they have tested the promises of the manufacturer and found them empty bubbles can only be understood and imagined when one has seen their life, lived among them, worked by their side, and comprehended the tragedy of this population—a floating population, going from Granton to Excelsior, from Excelsior

to Richland, hither and thither, seeking—seeking better conditions. They have no affiliation with the people of the town; they are looked down upon as scum: and in good sooth, for good reason, scum they are!

It is spring, warm, gracious. This part of the world seems to be well-nigh treeless! There is no generous foliage, but wherever there are branches to bear it the first green has started out, delicate, tender and beautiful.

In my simple work garb I leave Columbia and take a trolley to the mill district. I have chosen Excelsior as best for my purpose. Its reputation is most at stake; its prospectus dazzling; its annals effective. If such things are done in Gath . . .!

I cannot say with what timidity I descend from the tram in this strange country, foreign to my Northern habitation and filled with classes whose likeness I have never seen and around which the Southern Negro makes a sad and gloomy background.

Before the trolley has arrived at the corporation stores Excelsior has spoken—roared, clicked forth so vibrantly, so loudly, I am prepared to feel the earth shake. This is the largest mill in the world and looks it! A model, too, in point of view of architecture. I have read in the prospectus that it represents $1,750,000 capital, possesses 104,000 spindles, employs 1,200 hands, and can, with crowding, employ 3,000. Surely it will have place for one

more, then! I am impressed with its grandeur as it rises, red-bricked, with proud, straight towers toward its centre—impressed and frightened by its insistent call as it rattles and hums to me across the one-sixteenth of a mile of arid sand track. At one side Christianity and doctrine have constructed a church: a second one is building. On the other side, at a little distance, lies Granton, second largest mill. All this I take in as I make my way Excelsiorward. Between me and the vast mill itself there is not a soul. A thick, sandy road winds to the right; in the distance I can see a black trestle over which the freight cars take the cotton manufactures to the distant railroad and ship them to all parts of the world. Beyond the trestle are visible the first shanties of the mill town.

Work first and lodgings afterward are my goals. At the door of Excelsior I am more than overwhelmed by its magnificence and its loud voice that makes itself so far-reachingly heard. There is no entry for me at the front of the mill, and I toil around to the side; not a creature to be seen. I venture upon the landing and make my way along a line of freight cars —between the track and the mill.

A kind-faced man wanders out from an unobserved doorway; a gust of roar follows him! He sees me, and lifts his hat with the ready Southern courtesy not yet extinct. I hasten to ask for work.

"MIGHTY MILL—PRIDE OF THE ARCHITECT AND THE COMMERCIAL MAGNATE"

"Charnel house, destroyer of homes, of all that mankind calls hallowed, breeder of strife, of strike, of immorality, of sedition and riot"

"Well, thar's jest plenty of work, I reckon! Go in that do'; the overseer will tell you."

Through the door open behind him I catch glimpses of a room enormous in dimensions. Cotton bales lie on the floor, stand around the walls and are piled in the centre. Leaning on them, handling them, lying on them, outstretched, or slipping like shadows into shadow, are the dusky shapes of the black Negro of true Southern blood. I have been told there is no Negro labour in the mills. I take advantage of my guide's kind face to ask him if he knows where I can lodge.

"Hed the measles? Well, my gyrl got 'em. Thar's a powerful sight of measles hyar. I'd take you-all to bo'd at my house ef you ain't 'fraid of measles. Thar's the hotel." (He points to what at the North would be known as a brick shanty.) "A gyrl can bo'd thar for $2.25 a week. You won't make that at first."

With extreme kindness he leads me into the roaring mill past picturesque black men and cotton bales: we reach the "weave-room." I am told that carpet factories are celebrated for their uproar, but the weave-looms of a cotton mill to those who know them need no description! This is chaos before order was conceived: more weird in that, despite the din and thunder, everything is so orderly, so perfectly carried forth by the machinery. Here the cotton cloth is woven. Excelsior is so vast that from

one end to the other of a room one cannot distinguish a friend. I decide instantly that the weave-room shall not be my destination! An overseer comes up to me. He talks with me politely and kindly—that is, as well as he can, he talks! It is almost impossible to hear what he says. He asks me simple and few questions and engages me promptly to work that "*evening*," as the Southerner calls the hours after midday.

"You can see all the work and choose a sitting or a standing job." This is an improvement on Pittsburg and Lynn.

I have been told there is always work in the mills for the worker.

It is not strange that every inducement consistent with corporation rules should be made to entice the labouring girl! The difficulty is that no effort is made to keep her! The ease with which, in all these experiences, work has been obtained, goes definitely to prove that there is a demand everywhere for labourers.

Organize labour, therefore, so well that the workwoman who obtains her task may be able to continue it and keep her health and her self-respect.

With Excelsior as my future workshop I leave the mill to seek lodging in the mill village.

The houses built by the corporation for the hands are some five or six minutes' walk, not more, from the palace-like structure of the mill proper. To reach

them I plod through a roadway ankle-deep in red clay dust. The sun is bright and the air heavy, lifeless and dull; the scene before me is desolate, meager and poverty-stricken in the extreme.

The mill houses are all built exactly alike. Painted in sickly greens and yellows, they rise on stilt-like elevations above the malarial soil. Here the architect has catered to the different families, different individual tastes in one point of view alone, regarding the number of rooms: They are known as "four- or six-room cottages." In one of the first cottages to the right a wholesome sight—the single wholesome sight I see during my experience—meets my eye. Human kindness has transformed one of the houses into a kindergarten—"Kindergarten" is over the door. A pretty Southern girl, a lady, stands surrounded by her little flock. The handful of half a dozen emancipated children who are not in the mills is refreshing to see. There are very few; the kindergarten flags for lack of little scholars.

I accost her. "Can you tell me any decent place to board?" She is sorry, regards me kindly with the expression I have grown to know—the look the eyes adopt when a person of one class addresses her sister in a lower range.

"I am a stranger come out to work in the mills."

But the young lady takes little interest in me. Children are her care. They surround her, clinging, laughing, calling—little birds fed so gently by the

womanly hand. She turns from the working-woman to them, but not before indicating a shanty opposite:

"Mrs. Green lives there in that four-room cottage. She is a good woman."

Through the door's crack I interview Mrs. Green, a pallid, sickly creature, gowned, as are most of the women, in a calico garment made all in one piece. She permits me to enter the room which forms (as do all the front rooms in a mill cottage) bedroom and general living-room.

Here is confusion incarnate—and filthy disorder. The tumbled, dirty bed fills up one-half the room. In it is a little child, shaking with chills. On the bare floor are bits of food, old vegetables, rags, dirty utensils of all sorts of domestic description. The house has a sickening odour. The woman tells me she is too ill to keep tidy—too ill to keep boarders. We do not strike a bargain. "I am only here four months," she said. "Sick ever since I come, and my little girl has fevernaygu."

I wander forth and a child directs me to a six-room cottage, "a real bo'din'-house." I attack it and thus discover the dwelling where I make my home in Excelsior.

From the front room of this dwelling a kitchen opens. Within its shadow I see a Negro washing dishes. A tall woman, taller than most men, angular, white-haired, her face seared by toil and

stricken with age, greets me: she is the landlady. At her skirts, catching them and staring at a stranger, wanders a very young child—a blue-eyed, clean little being; a great relief, in point of fact, to the general filth hitherto presented me. The room beyond me is clean. I draw a breath of gratitude.

"Mrs. Jones?"

"Yes, this is Jones' bo'din'-house."

The old woman has a comb in her hand; she has "jest ben com'in' Letty's hair." Letty smiles delightedly.

"This yere's the child of the lady upstairs. The mother's a pore sick thing." Mrs. Jones bends the stiffness of sixty-eight years over the stranger's child. "And grandmaw keeps Letty clean, don't she, Letty? She don't never whip her, neither; jest a little cross to her."

"Can I find lodging here?"

She looks at me. "Yes, ma'am, you kin. I'm full up; got a lot of gentlemen bo'ders, but not many ladies. I got one bed up aloft; you can't have it alone neither, and the baby's mother is sick up there, too. Nuthin' ketchin'. She come here a stranger; the mill was too hard on her; she's ben sick fo' days."

I had made a quick decision and accepted half a bed. I would return at noon.

"Stranger hyar, I reckon?"

"Yes; from Massachusetts. A shoe-hand."

She shakes her head: "You wont like the mills."

She draws Letty between her old stiff knees, seats herself on a straight chair, and combs the child's hair on either side its pathetic, gentle little face. So I leave her for the present to return to Columbia and fetch back with me my bundle of clothes.

. . . . . .

When I return at noon it is dinner time. I enter and am introduced, with positive grace and courtesy, by my dear old landlady to her son-in-law, "Tommy Jones," a widower, a man in decent store clothes and a Derby hat surrounded by a majestic crape sash. He is nonchalantly loading a large revolver, and thrusts it in his trousers pocket: "Always carry it," he explains; "comes handy!" Then I am presented to the gentlemen boarders. I beg to go upstairs, with my bundles, and I see for the first time my dwelling part of this shanty.

A ladderlike stair leading directly from the kitchen takes me into the loft. Heavens! the sight of that sleeping apartment! There are three beds in it, sagging beds, covered by calico comforters. The floor is bare; the walls are bare. I have grown to know that "Jones'" is the cleanliest place in the Excelsior village, and yet to our thinking it lacks perfection. Around the bare walls hang the garments of the other women who share the room with me. What humble and pathetic decorations! poor, miserable clothes—a shawl or two, a coat or two, a cotton wrapper, a hat; and on one nail the miniature

clothes of Letty—a little night-dress and a tiny blue cotton dress. I put my bundle down by the side of my bed which I am to share with another woman, and descend, for Mrs. Jones' voice summons me to the midday meal.

The nourishment provided for these thirteen-hour-a-day labourers is as follows: On a tin saucepan there was a little salt pork and on another dish a pile of grease-swimming spinach. A ragged Negro hovered over these articles of diet; the room was full of the smell of frying. After the excitement of my search for work, and the success, if success it can be called that so far had met me, I could not eat; I did not even sit down. I made my excuse. I said that I had had something to eat in Columbia, and started out to the mill.

By the time the mill-hand has reached his home a good fifteen minutes out of the three-quarters of an hour recreation is gone: his food is quickly bolted, and by the time I have reached the little brick hotel pointed out to me that morning and descended to its cellar restaurant, forced myself to drink a cup of sassafras tea, and mounted again into the air, the troop of workers is on the march millward. I join them.

Although the student of philanthropy and the statistician would find difficulty in forcing the countersign of the manufactories, the worker may go everywhere.

I do not see my friend of the morning, the overseer, in the "weave-room"; indeed, there is no one to direct me; but I discover, after climbing the stairs, a room of flying spools and more subdued machinery, and it appears that the spool-room is this man's especial charge. He consigns to me a standing job. A set of revolving spools is designated, and he secures a pretty young girl of about sixteen, who comes cheerfully forward and consents to "learn" me.

Spooling is not disagreeable, and the room is the quietest part of the mill—noisy enough, but calm compared to the others. In Excelsior this room is, of course, enormous, light and well ventilated, although the temperature, on account of some quality of the yarn, is kept at a point of humidity far from wholesome.

"Spooling" is hard on the left arm and the side. Heart disease is a frequent complaint amongst the older spoolers. It is not dirty compared to shoemaking, and whereas one stands to "spool," when one is not waiting for yarn it is constant movement up and down the line. The fact that there are more children than young girls, more young girls than women, proves the simplicity of this task. The cotton comes from the spinning-room to the spool-room, and as the girl stands before her "side," as it is called, she sees on a raised ledge, whirling in rapid vibration, some one hundred huge spools full

of yarn; whilst below her, each in its little case, lies a second bobbin of yarn wound like a distaff.

Her task controls machinery in constant motion, that never stops except in case of accident.

With one finger of her right hand she detaches the yarn from the distaff that lies inert in the little iron rut before her. With her left hand she seizes the revolving circle of the large spool's top in front of her, holding this spool steady, overcoming the machinery for the moment not as strong as her grasp. This demands a certain effort. Still controlling the agitated spool with her left hand, she detaches the end of yarn with the same hand from the spool, and by means of a patent knotter harnessed around her palm she joins together the two loosened ends, one from the little distaff and one from this large spool, so that the two objects are set whirling in unison and the spool receives all the yarn from the distaff. Up and down this line the spooler must walk all day long, replenishing the iron grooves with fresh yarn and reknitting broken strands. This is all that there is of "spooling." It demands alertness, quickness and a certain amount of strength from the left arm, and that is all! To conceive of a woman of intelligence pursuing this task from the age of eight years to twenty-two on down through incredible hours is not salutary. You will say to me, that if she demands nothing more she is fit for nothing more. I cannot think it.

The little girl who teaches me spooling is fresh and cheerful and jolly; I grant her all this. She lives at home. I am told by my subsequent friends that she thinks herself better than anybody. This pride and ambition has at least elevated her to neat clothes and a sprightliness of manner that is refreshing. She does not hesitate to evince her superiority by making sport of me. She takes no pains to teach me well. Instead of giving me the patent knotter, which would have simplified my job enormously, she teaches me what she expresses "the old-fashioned way"—knotting the yarn with the fingers. I have mastered this slow process by the time that the overseer discovers her trick and brings me the harness for my left hand. She is full of curiosity about me, asking me every sort of question, to which I give the best answers that I can. By and by she slips away from me. I turn to find her; she has vanished, leaving me under the care of a truly kind, sad little creature in a wrapper dress. This little Maggie has a heart of gold.

"Don't you-all fret," she consoles. "That's like Jeannie: she's so *mean*. When you git to be a remarkable fine spooler she'll want you on her side, you bet."

She assists my awkwardness gently.

"I'll learn you all right. You-all kin stan' hyar by me all day. Jeannie clean fergits she was a greenhorn herself onct; we all wuz. Whar you come from?"

"Lynn, Massachusetts."

"Did you-all git *worried* with the train? I only bin onto it onct, and it worried me for days!"

She tells me her simple annals with no question:

"My paw he married ag'in, and me stepmother peard like she didn't care for me; so one day I sez to paw, 'I'm goin' to work in the mills'—an' I lef' home all alone and come here." After a little—"When I sayd good-by to my father peard like *he* didn't care neither. I'm all alone here. I bo'ds with that girl's mother."

I wore that day in the mill a blue-checked apron. So did Maggie, but mine was from Wanamaker's in New York, and had, I suppose, a certain style, for the child said:

"I suttenly dew think that yere's a awful pretty apron: where'd you git it?"

"Where I came from," I answered, and, I am sorry to say, it sounded brusque. For the little thing blushed, fearful lest she had been indiscreet. . . . (Oh, I assure you the qualities of good breeding are there! Some of my factory and mill friends can teach the set in which I move lessons salutary!)

"I didn't mean jest 'xactly wherebouts," she murmurs; "I only meant it warn't from these parts."

. . . . . .

During the afternoon the gay Jeannie returns and presents to me a tin box. It is filled with a black

powder. "Want some?" Well, what is it? She greets my ignorance with shrieks of laughter. In a trice half a dozen girls have left their spooling and cluster around me.

"She ain't never *seen* it!" and the little creature fills her mouth with the powder which she keeps under her tongue. "It is *snuff!*"

They all take it, old and young, even the smallest children. Their mouths are brown with it; their teeth are black with it. They take it and smell it and carry it about under their tongues all day in a black wad, spitting it all over the floor. Others "dip," going about with the long sticks in their mouths. The air of the room is white with cotton, although the spool-room is perhaps the freest. These little particles are breathed into the nose, drawn into the lungs. Lung disease and pneumonia—consumption—are the constant, never-absent scourge of the mill village. The girls expectorate to such an extent that the floor is nauseous with it; the little girls practise spitting and are adepts at it.

Over there is a woman of sixty, spooling; behind the next side is a child, not younger than eight, possibly, but so small that she has to stand on a box to reach her side. Only the very young girls show any trace of buoyancy; the older ones have accepted with more or less complaint the limitation of their horizons. They are drawn from the hill

district with traditions no better than the loneliness, desertion and inexperience of the fever-stricken mountains back of them. They are illiterate, degraded; the mill has been their widest experience; and all their tutelage is the intercourse of girl to girl during the day and in the evenings the few moments before they go to bed in the mill-houses, where they either live at home with parents and brothers all working like themselves, or else they are fugitive lodgers in a boarding-house or a hotel, where their morals are in jeopardy constantly. As soon as a girl passes the age, let us say of seventeen or eighteen, there is no hesitation in her reply when you ask her: "Do you like the mills?" Without exception the answer is, "I *hate them.*"

Absorbed with the novelty of learning my trade, the time goes swiftly. Yet even the interest and excitement does not prevent fatigue, and from 12:45 to 6:45 seems interminable! Even when the whistle blows we are not all free—Excelsior is behindhand with her production, and those whom extra pay can beguile stay on. Maggie, my little teacher, walks with me toward our divided destinations, her quasi-home and mine.

Neither in the mill nor the shoe-shops did I take precaution to change my way of speaking—and not once had it been commented upon. To-day Maggie says to me:

"I reckon you-all is 'Piscopah?"

"Why?"

"Why, you-all *talks* 'Piscopal."

So much for a tribute to the culture of the church.

. . . . . .

At Jones' supper is ready, spread on a bare board running the length of the room—a bare board supported by saw-horses; the seats are boards again, a little lower in height. They sag in the middle threateningly. One plate is piled high with fish—bones, skin and flesh all together in one odourous mass. Salt pork graces another platter and hominy another. I am alone in the supper room. The guests, landlord and landlady are all absent. Some one, as he rushes by me, gives me the reason for the desertion:

"They've all gone to see the fight; all the white fellers is after a nigger."

Through the window I can see the fleeing forms of the settlers—women, sunbonnets in hand, the men hatless. It appears that all the world has turned out to see what lawless excitement may be in store. The whirling dust and sand in the distance denote the group formed by the Negro and his pursuers. This, standing on the little porch of my lodging-house, I see and am glad to find that the chase is fruitless. The black man, tortured to distraction, dared at length to rebel, and from the moment that he showed spirit his life was not worth a farthing, but his legs were, and he got clear of Excelsior. The

lodgers troop back. Molly, my landlady's niece, breathing and panting, disheveled, leads the procession and is voluble over the affair.

"They-all pester a po'r nigger's life out 'er him, ye'es, they dew so! Ef a nigger wants ter show his manners to me, why, I show mine to him," she said generously, "and ef he's a mannerly nigger, why, I ain't got nothin' ag'in him; no, sir, I suttenly ain't!"

It is difficult to conceive how broad and philanthropic, how generous and unusual this poor mill girl's standpoint is contrasted with the sentiment of the people with which she moves.

I slip into my seat at the table in the centre of the sagging board and find Molly beside me, the girl from Excelsior with the pretty hair on the other side. The host, Mr. Jones, honours the head of the table, and "grandmaw" waits upon us. Opposite are the three men operatives, flannel-shirted and dirty. The men are silent for the most part, and bend over their food, devouring the unpalatable stuff before them. I feel convinced that if they were not so terribly hungry they could not eat it. Jones discourses affably on the mill question, advising me to learn "speeding," as it pays better and is the only advanced work in the mill.

Molly, my elbow-companion, seems to take up the whole broad seat, she is so big and so pervading; and her close proximity—unwashed, heavy with perspiration as she is, is not conducive to appetite.

She is full of news and chatter and becomes the leading spirit of the meal.

"I reckon you-all never did see anything like the fight to the mill to-day."

She arouses at once the interest of even the dull men opposite, who pause, in the applying of their knives and forks, to hear.

"Amanda Wilcox she dun tol' Ida Jacobs that she'd *do her* at noon, and Ida she sarst her back. It was all about a *sport**—Bill James. He's been spo'tin' Ida Jacobs these three weeks, I reckon, and Amanda got crazy over it and 'clared she'd spile her game. And she tol' Ida Jacobs a lie about Bill—sayd he' been spo'tin' her down to the Park on Sunday.

"Well, sir, the whole spinnin'-room was out to see what they-all'd do at noon, and they jest resh'd for each other like's they was crazy; and one man he got between 'em and sayd, 'Now the gyrl what spits over my hand first can begin the fight.'

"They both them spit right into each other's faces, they did so; and arter that yer couldn't get them apart. Ida Jacobs grabbed Amanda by the ha'r and Amanda hit her plump in the chest with her fist. They was suttenly like to kill each other ef the men hadn't just parted them; it took three men to part 'em."

Her story was much appreciated.

*A beau.

"Ida was dun fer, I can tell ye; she suttenly was. She can't git back to work fer days."

The spinning-room is the toughest room in the mill.

After supper the men went out on the porch with their pipes and we to the sitting-room, where Molly, the story-teller, seated herself in a comfortable chair, her feet outstretched before her. She made a lap, a generous lap, to which she tried to beguile the baby, Letty. Mrs. White had disappeared.

"You-all come here to me, Letty." She held out her large dirty hands to the blue-eyed waif. In its blue-checked apron, the remains of fish and ham around its mouth, its large blue eyes wandering from face to face in search of the pale mother who had for a time left her, Letty stood for a moment motionless and on the verge of tears.

"You-all come to Molly and go By-O."

There was some magic in that word that at long past eight charmed the eighteen-months'-old baby. She toddled across the floor to the mill-girl, who lifted her tenderly into her ample lap. The big, awkward girl, scarcely more than a child herself, uncouth, untutored, suddenly gained a dignity and a grace maternal—not too much to say it, she had charm.

Letty leaned her head against Molly's breast and smiled contentedly, whilst the mill-girl rocked softly to and fro.

"Shall Molly sing By-O?"

She should. The little face, lifted, declared its request.

"Letty must sing, too," murmured the young girl. "Sing By-O! We'll all sing it together."

Letty covered her eyes with one hand to feign sleep and sang her two words sweetly, "By-O! By-O!" and Molly joined her. Thus they rocked and hummed, a picture infinitely touching to see.

One of these two would soon be an unclaimed foundling when the unknown woman had faded out of existence. The other—who can say how to her maternity would come!

. . . . . .

In the room where we sit Jones' wife died a few weeks before, victim to pneumonia that all winter has scourged the town—"the ketchin' kind" —that is the way it has been caught, and fatally by many.*

In one corner stands a sewing machine, in another an organ—luxuries: in these cases, objects of art. They are bought on the installment plan, and some of these girls pay as high as $100 for the organ in monthly payments of $4 at a time. The mill-girl is too busy to use the machine and too ignorant to play the organ.

Jones is a courteous host. His lodgers occupy

*There are no statistics, they tell me, kept of births, marriages or deaths in this State; it is less surprising that the mill village has none.

the comfortable seats, whilst he perches himself on the edge of a straight high-backed chair and converses with us, not lighting his pipe until urged, then deprecatingly smoking in little smothered puffs. I feel convinced that Jones thinks that Massachusetts shoe-hands are a grade higher in the social scale than South Carolina mill-girls! Because, after being witness more than once to my morning and evening ablutions on the back steps, he said:

"Now, I am goin' to dew the right thing by you-all; I'm goin' to fix up a wash-stand in that there loft." This is a triumph over the lax, uncleanly shiftlessness of the Southern settlement. Again:

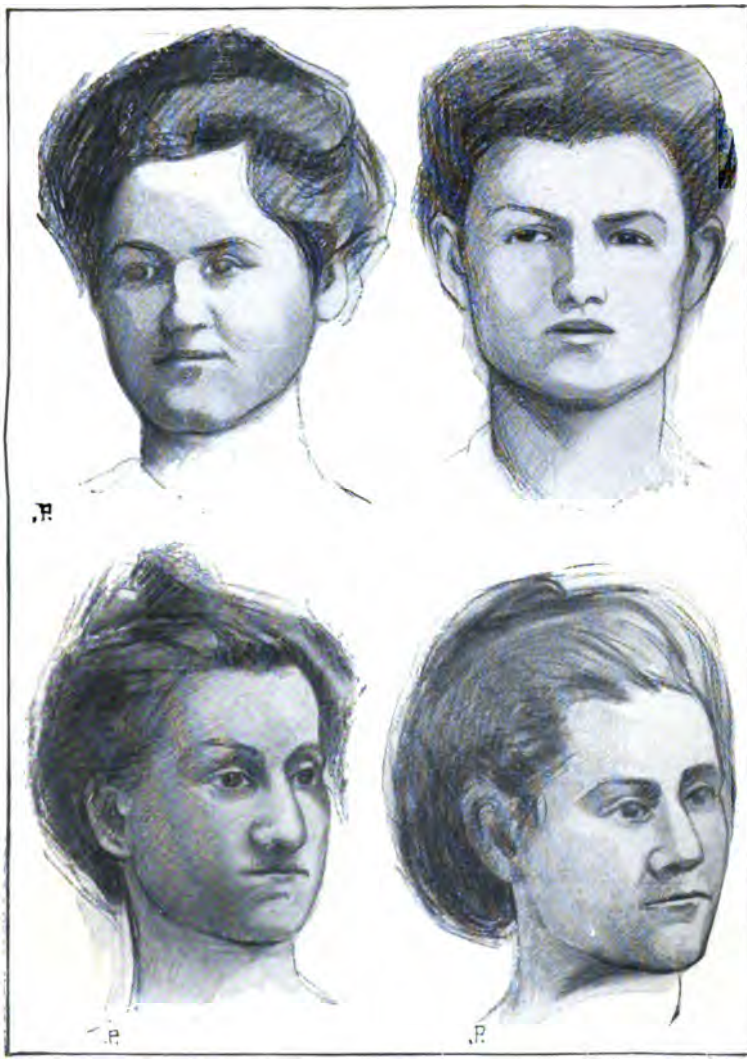
"You-all must of had good food whar you come from: your skin shows it; 'tain't much like hyar-'bouts. Why, I'd know a mill-hand anywhere, if I met her at the North Pole—salla, pale, sickly."

I might have added for him, deathlike, . . . skeleton, . . . *doomed.* But I listen, rocking in the best chair, whilst Mrs. White glides in from the kitchen and, unobserved, takes her place on a little low chair by the sewing machine behind Jones. Her baby rocks contentedly in Molly's arms.

Jones continues: "I worked in the mill fifteen years. I have done a little of all jobs, I reckon, and I ain't got no use for mill-work. If they'd pay me fifty cents a side to run the 'speeders' I'd go in fer an hour or two now and then. Why, I sell sewing machines and organs to the mill-hands all over the

country. I make $60 a month, and *I touch all my money*," he said significantly. "It's the way to do. A man don't feel no dignity unless he does handle his own money, if it's ten cents or ten dollars." He then explains the corporation's methods of paying its slaves. Some of the hands never touch their money from month's end to month's end. Once in two weeks is pay-day. A woman has then worked 122 hours. The corporation furnishes her house. There is the rent to be paid; there are also the corporation stores from which she has been getting her food and coal and what gewgaws the cheap stuff on sale may tempt her to purchase. There is a book of coupons issued by the mill owners which are as good as gold. It is good at the stores, good for the rent, and her time is served out in pay for this representative currency. This is of course not obligatory, but many of the operatives avail themselves or bind themselves by it. When the people are ill, Jones says, they are docked for wages. When, for indisposition or fatigue, they knock a day off, there is a man, hired especially for this purpose, who rides from house to house to find out what is the matter with them, to urge them to rise, and if they are not literally too sick to move, they are hounded out of their beds and back to their looms.

Jones himself, mark you, is emancipated! He has set himself free; but he is still a too-evident although a very innocent partisan of the corporation.



"THE SOUTHERN MILL HAND'S FACE IS UNIQUE, A FEARFUL TYPE"

"I think," he says, "that the mill-hand is *meaner* to the corporation than the corporation is to the mill-hand."

"Why?"

"Why, they would strike for shorter hours and better pay."

Unconsciously with one word he condemns his own cause.

"What's the use of these hyar mill-hands tryin' to fight corporations? Why, Excelsior is the biggest mill under one roof in the world; its capital is over a million; it has 24,500 spindles. The men that run these mills have got all their stuff paid for; they've got piles of money. What do they care for a few penniless lot of strikers? They can shut down and not feel it. Why, these hyar people might just as well fight against a stone wall."

The wages of these people, remember, pay Jones for the organs upon which they cannot play and the machines which they cannot use. His home is a mill corporation house; he makes a neat sum by lodging the hands. He has fetched down from the hills Molly, his own niece, to work for him. He perforce *will* speak well. I do not blame him.

He is by all means the most respectable-looking member of the colony. He wears store clothes; he dresses neatly; he is shaven, brushed and washed.

"Don't you let the mill hands discourage you with lies about the mill. Any of 'em would be jealous of

you-all." Then he warns, again forced to plead for another side: "You-all won't come out as you go in, I tell you! You're the picture of health. Why," he continues, a little later, "you ain't got no idea how light-minded the mill-girl is. Why, in the summer time she'll trolley four or five miles to a dance-hall they've got down to ——— and dance there till four o'clock—come home just in time to get into the mills at 5:45." Which fact convinces me of nothing but that the women are still, despite their condition and their white slavery, human beings, and many of them are young human beings (Thank God, for it is a prophecy for their future!) *not yet crushed to the dumb endurance of beasts.*

Rather early I bid them all good-night and climb the attic stairs to my loft. There the three beds arrayed in soggy striped comforters greet me. Old boots and downtrodden shoes are thrown into the corners and the lines of clothing already describe fantastic shapes in the dark, suggesting pendant sinister figures. Windows are large, thank Heaven! In the mill district the air is heavy, singularly lifeless; the night is warm and stifling.

Close to an old trunk I sit down with a slip of paper on my knee and try to take a few notes. But no sooner have I begun to write than a step on the stair below announces another comer. Before annoyance can deepen too profoundly the big, awkward form of the landlady's niece slouches into sight. Sheepishly

she comes across the room to me—sits down on the nearest bed. Molly's costume is typical: a dark cotton wrapper whose colours have become indistinct in the stains of machinery oil and perspiration. The mill girl boasts no coquetry of any kind around her neck and waist, but her headdress is a tribute to feminine vanity! Compactly screwed curl papers, dozens of them, accentuate the hard, unlovely lines of her face and brow. Her features are coarse, heavy and square, but her eyes are clear, frank and kind. She has an appealing, friendly expression; Molly is a distinctly whole-souled, nice creature. One elbow sinks in the bed and she cradles her crimped head in her large, dirty hand.

"My, ef I could write as fast as you-all I'd write some letters, I reckon. Ust ter write; like it good enough, tew; but I ain't wrote in months. I was thinkin' th' other day ef I didn't take out the *pencile* I'd dun forgit how to spell."

Without the window through which she gazes is seen the pale night sky and in the heavens hangs the thread of a moon. Its light is unavailing alongside of the artificial moon—an enormous electric light. This lifts its brilliant, dazzling circumference high in the centre of the mill street. I have but to move a trifle aside from the window coping's shelter to receive a blinding blaze. But Molly has been subtle enough to discover the natural beauty of the night. She sees, curiously enough, past this modern

illumination: the young moon has charm for her. "Ain't it a pretty night?" she asks me. Its beauty has not much chance to enhance this room and the crude forms, but it has awakened something akin to sentiment in the breast of this young savage.

"I don't guess ever any one gets tired of hearing *sweet music*,* does you-all?"

"What is the nicest music you have ever heard, Molly?"

"Why, a gui-taar an' a mandolin. It's so sweet! I could sit for hours an' hyar 'em pick." Her curl-paper head wags in enthusiasm.

"Up to the hills, from whar I cum, I ust ter hyar 'em a serenadin' of some gyrl an' I ust ter set up in bed and lis'en tel it died out; it warn't for *me*, tho'!"

"Didn't they ever serenade you?"

"No, *ma'am*; I don't pay no 'tention to spo'tin'."

Without, the moon's slender thread holds in a silvery circle the half-defined misty ball that shall soon be full moon. Thank heavens I shall not see this golden globe form, wane, decline in this town, forgotten of gods and men! But the woman at my side must see it mark its seasons; she is inscrutably part of the colony devoted to unending toil! Here all she has brought of strong youth shall fade and perish; womanly sentiment be crushed; die out in sterility; or worse, coarsen to the animal like to those whose companion she is forced to be.

*The Southern term for stringed instruments.

"I live to the Rockies, an' Uncle Tom he come up after me and carried me down hyar. My auntie died two weeks ago in the livin'-room; she had catchin' pneumonia. I tuk care of her all through her sickness, did every mite for her, and there was bo'ders, tew—I guess half a dozen of 'em—and I cooked and washed and everything for 'em all. When she died I went to work in the mill. Say, I reckon you-all didn't see my new hat?" It was fetched, done up with care in paper. She displayed it, a white straw round hat, covered with roses. At praise of it and admiration the girl flushed with pleasure.

"My, you *dew* like it? Why, I didn't think it *pretty, much.* Uncle Tom dun buy it for me."

She gives all her wages to Uncle Tom, who in turn brings her from time to time such stimulus to labour as some pretty feminine thing like this. *This* shall crown Molly's hair freed from the crimpers when the one day of the week, Sunday, comes! Not from Sunday till Sunday again are those hair crimpers unloosed.

Despite Uncle Tom's opposition to mill work for women, despite his cognizance of the unhealthfulness of the mills, he knew a thing or two when he put his strapping innocent niece to work thirteen hours a day and pocketed himself the spoils.

"I can't go to bade awful early, because I don't sleep ef I do; I'm too tired to sleep. When I feel

real sick I tries to stay home a day, and then the overseer he rides around and *worries* me to git up. I declare ef I wouldn't near as soon git up as to be roused up. They don't give you no peace, rousing you out of bed when you can scarcely stand. I suttenly dew feel bade to-night; I suttenly can't scarcely get to bed!"

Here into our discourse, mounting the stairs, comes the pale mother and her little child. This ghost of a woman, wedding-ringless, who called herself Mrs. White, could scarcely crawl to her bed. She was whiter than the moon and as slender. Molly's bed is close to mine. The night toilet of this girl consisted of her divesting herself of her shoes, stockings and her cotton wrapper, then in all the other garments she wore during the day she turned herself into bed, nightgownless, unwashed.

Mrs. White undressed her child, giving it very good care. It was a tiny creature, small-boned and meager. Every time I looked over at it it smiled appealingly, touchingly. Finally when she went downstairs to the pump to get a drink of water for it, I went over and in her absence stroked the little hand and arm: such a small hand and such an infinitesimal arm! Unused to attention and the touch, but not in the least frightened, Letty extended her miniature member and looked up at me in marvel. Mrs. White on her return made herself ready for the night. She said in her frail

voice: "Letty's a powerful hand for vegetubbles, and she eats everything."

Memory of the ham and the putrid fish I had seen this eighteen-months-old child devour not an hour ago came to my mind.

Mrs. White let down her hair—a nonchalance that Molly had not been guilty of. This woman's hair was no more than a wisp. It stood out thin, wiry, almost invisible in the semilight. This was the extent of her toilet. She slipped out of her shoes, but she did not even take off her dress. Then she turned in by her child. She was very ill; it was plain to be seen. Death was fast upon this woman's track; it should clutch her inevitably within the next few weeks at most, if that emaciated body had resistance for so long. Her languor was slow and indicative, her gray, ashen face like death itself.

"Lie still, Letty," she whispers to the baby; "don't touch mother—she can't stand it to-night."

My mattress was straw and billowy, the bed sheetless, and under the weight of the cotton comforter I tried to compose myself. There were five of us in the little loft. My bedfellow was peaceful and lay still, too tired to do anything else. In front of me was the open window, through which shone the electric light, blatant and insistent; behind this, the clock of Excelsior—brightly lit and incandescent—glared in upon us, giant hands going round, seeming to threaten the hour of dawn and frightening

sleep and mocking, bugbearing the short hours which the working-woman might claim for repose.

It was well on to nine o'clock and the mills were working overtime. Molly turned restlessly on her bed and murmured, "I suttenly dew feel bad to-night." A little later I heard her say over to herself: "My, I forgot to say my prayers." She was the sole member of the loft to whom sleep came; it came to her soon. I lay sleepless, watching the clock of Excelsior. The ladder staircase openly led to the kitchen: there was no door, no privacy possible to our quarters, and the house was full of men.

A little later Letty cries: "A drink, a drink!" and the tone of the mother, who replies, is full of patience, but fuller still of suffering.

"Hush, Letty, hush! Mother's too sick to get it." But the child continues to fret and plead. Finally with a groan Mrs. White stretches out her hand and gets the tin mug of water, of that vile and dirty water which has brought death to so many in the mill village. The child drinks it greedily. I can hear it suck the fluid. Then the woman herself staggers to her feet, rises with dreadful illness upon her, and all through the hot stuffy night in the close air of the loft growing momentarily more fetid, unwholesome, intolerable—she rises to be violently sick over and over again. It seems an indefinite number of times to one who lies awake listening,

and must seem unceasing to the poor wretch who returns to her bed only to rise again.

She groans and suffers and bites her exclamations short. Twice she goes to the window and by the light of the electric lamp pours laudanum into a glass and takes it to still her pain and her need.

The odours become so nauseous that I am fain to cover my face and head. The child fed on salt ham and pork is restless and thirsty all night and begs for water at short intervals. At last the demand is too much for the poor agonized mother—she takes refuge in silencing unworthy, and to which one feels her gentleness must be forced. "Hark! The cat will get you, Letty! See that cat?" And the feline horror in nameless form, evoked in an awe-inspiring whisper, controls the little creature, who murmurs, sobs and subsides.

What spirit deeper than her character has hitherto displayed stirs the mill-girl in the bed next to me? Possibly the tragedy in the other bed; possibly the tragedy of her own youth. At all events, whatever burden is on her, her cross is heavy! She murmurs in her dreams, in a voice more mature, more serious than any tone of hers has indicated:

"Oh, my God!"

It is a strange cry—call—appeal. It rings solemn to me as I lie and watch and pity. Hours of night which should be to the labourer peaceful, full of repose after the day, drag along from nine o'clock,

when we went to bed, till three. At three Mrs. White falls into a doze. I envy her. Over me the vermin have run riot; I have killed them on my neck and my arms. When it seemed that flesh and blood must succumb, and sleep, through sheer pity, take hold of us, a stirring begins in the kitchen below which in its proximity seems a part of the very room we occupy. The landlady, Mrs. Jones, has arisen; she is making her fire. At a quarter to four Mrs. Jones begins her frying; at four a deep, blue, ugly smoke has ascended the stairway to us. This smoke is thick with odours—the odour of bad grease and bad meat. Its cloud conceals the beds from me and I can scarcely pierce its curtain to look through the window. It settles down over the beds like a creature; it insinuates itself into the clothes that hang upon the wall. So permeating is it that the odour of fried food clings to everything I wear and haunts me all day. I can hear the sputtering of the saucepan and the fall and flap of the pieces of meat as she drops them in to fry. *I know what they are*, for I have seen them the night before—great crimson bits of flesh torn to pieces and arranged in rows by the fingers of a ragged Negro as he crouched by the kitchen table.

This preparation continues for an hour: it takes an abnormally long time to cook abnormally bad food! Long before five the clock of Excelsior rings and the cry of the mill is heard waking whomsoever

might be lucky enough to be asleep. Mrs. Jones calls Molly. "Molly!" The girl murmurs and turns. "Come, you-all git up; you take so powerful long to dress yo'self!" Long to dress! It is difficult to see how that would be possible. She rises reluctantly, yawning, sighing; lifts her scarcely rested body, puts on her stockings and her shoes and the dirty wrapper. Her hair is untouched, her face unwashed, but she is ready for the day! Mrs. White has actually fallen asleep, the small roll, her baby, curled up close to her back.

Molly's summons is mine as well. I am a mill-hand with her. I rise and repeat my ablutions of the evening before. Unhooking the tin basin, possessing myself of a bit of soap on the kitchen stairs, I wash my face and hands. Although the water is dipped from the pail on which a scum has formed, still it is so much more cool, refreshing and stimulating than anything that has come in contact with me for hours that it is a positive pleasure.

. . . . . .

THE MILL

By this time the morning has found us all, and unlovely it seems as regarded from this shanty environment. At 4:50 Excelsior has shrieked every settler awake. At half-past five we have breakfasted and I pass out of the house, one of the half-dozen who seek the mill from our doors.

We fall in with the slowly moving, straggling file, receiving additions from each tenement as we pass.

Beside me walks a boy of fourteen in brown earth-coloured clothes. He is so thin that his bones threaten to pierce his vestments. He has a slender visage of the frailness I have learned to know and distinguish: it represents the pure American type of people known as "poor white trash," and with whose blood has been scarcely any admixture of foreign element. A painter would call his fine, sensitive face beautiful: it is the face of a martyr. His hat of brown felt slouches over bright red hair; one cuffless hand, lank and long, hangs down inert, the other sleeve falls loose; he is one-armed. His attitude and gait express his defrauded existence. Cotton clings to his clothes; his shoes, nearly falling off his feet, are red with clay stains. I greet him; he is shy and surprised, but returns the salutation and keeps step with me. He is "from the hills," an orphan, perfectly friendless. He boards with a lot of men; evidently their companionship has not been any solace to him, for, as he is alone this day, I see him always alone.

He works from 5:45 to 6:45, with three-quarters of an hour at noon, and has his Saturday afternoons and his Sundays free. He is destitute of the quality we call joy and has never known comfort. He makes fifty cents a day; he has no education, no way

of getting an education; he is almost a man, crippled and condemned. At my exclamation when he tells me the sum of his wages he looks up at me; a faint likeness to a smile comes about his thin lips: "*It keeps me in existence!*" he says in a slow drawl. He used just those words.

At the different doors of the mill we part. He is not unconscious of my fellowship with him, that I feel and know. A kindling light has come across his face. "Good luck to you!" I bid him, and he lifts his head and his bowed shoulders and with something like warmth replies, "I hope you-all will have good luck, tew."

As we come into the spooling-room from the hot air without the mill seems cold. I go over to a green box destined for the refuse of the floors and sit down, waiting for work. On this day I am to have my own "side"—I am a full-fledged spooler. Excelsior has gotten us all out of our beds before actual daylight, but that does not mean we are to have a chance to begin our money-making piece-work job at once! "Thar ain't likely to be no yarn for an hour to-day," Maggie tells me. She is no less dirty than yesterday, or less smelly, but also she is no less kind.

"I reckon you-all are goin' to make a remarkable spooler," she cheers me on. "You'll get tired out at first, but then I gets tired, tew, right along, only it ain't the same *kĭnd*—it's not so *sharp*." Her distinction is clever.

Across the room at one of the "drawing-in frames" I see the figure of an unusally pretty girl with curly dark hair. She bends to her job in front of the frame she runs; it has the effect of tapestry, of that work with which women of another—oh, of *quite* another class—amuse their leisure, with which they kill their time. "Drawing-in,"* although a sitting job, is considered to be a back-breaker. The girls are ambitious at this work; they make good wages. They sit close to their frames, bent over, for twelve hours out of the day. This girl whom I see across the floor of the Excelsior is an object to rest the eyes upon; she is a beauty. There is not much beauty of any kind or description in sight. Maggie has noticed her esthetic effect. "You-all seen that girl; she's suttenly prob'ly am *peart*."

She is a new hand from a distance. This is her first day. What miserable chance has brought her here? If she stays the mill will claim her body and soul. The overseer has marked her out; he hovers in the part of the room where she works. She has colour and her difference to her pale companions is marked. Excelsior will not leave those roses unwithered. I can foretell the change as yellow unhealthfulness creeps upon her cheeks and the red forever goes. There are no red cheeks here, not one. She has chosen a sitting-down job thinking it easier. I saw her lean back, put her hands around her waist

*A good drawer-in makes $1.25 a day.

and rest, or try to, after she has bent four hours over her close task. I go over to her.

"They say it's awful hard on the eyes, but they tell me, too, that I'll be a remarkable fine hand."

I saw her apply for work, and saw, too, the man's face as he looked at her when she asked: "Got any work?"

"We've got plenty of work for a good-looking woman like you," he said with significance, and took pains to place her within his sight.

The yarn has come in, and I return to my part of the mill; Maggie flies to her spools and leaves me to seek my distant place far away from her. I set my work in order; whilst my back is turned some girl possesses herself of my hand-harness. Mine was a new one, and the one she leaves for me is broken. This delays, naturally, and the overseer, after proving to his satisfaction that I am hampered, gets me a new one and I set to work.

Many of the older hands come without breakfast, and a little later tin pails or paper parcels appear. These operatives crouch down in a Turkish fashion at the machines' sides and take a hasty mouthful of their unwholesome, unpleasant-looking food, eating with their fingers more like animals than human beings. By eight the full steam power is on, to judge by the swift turning, the strong resistance of the spools. Not one of the women near me but is degrading to look upon and odourous to

approach. These creatures, ill clad, with matted, frowsy hair and hands that look as though they had never, never been washed, smell like the byre. As for the children, I must pass them by in this recital. The tiny, tiny children! The girls are profane, contentious, foul-mouthed. There is much partisanship and cliqueism; you can tell it by the scowls and the low, insulting words as an enemy passes. To protect the hair from the flying pieces of cotton the more particular women, and oftentimes children as well, wear felt hats pulled down well over the eyes. The cotton, indeed, thistledown-like, flies without cessation through the air—spins off from the spools; it rises and floats, falling on the garments and in the hair, entering the nostrils and throat and lungs. I repeat, the expectoration, the coughing and the throat-cleaning is constant. Over there two girls have taken advantage of a wait for yarn to go to sleep on the floor; their heads are pillowed on each others' shoulders; they rest against a cotton bale. Maggie wanders over to me to see "how you-all is gettin' on." "Tired?" "Well, I reckon I am. Thank God we get out in a little while now."

. . . . . .

One afternoon I went up to the loft to rest a few moments before going to the mill. Mrs. White was sitting on her bed, a slender figure in the blue-checked wrapper she always wore. Her head was close to

the window, her silhouette in the light, pale and slender. "I wa'n't sick when I come hyar, but them mills! They's suttinly tew hyard on a woman! Weave-room killed me, I guess. I couldn't hyar at all when I come out and scarcely could stan' on ma feet when I got home. Tew tyred to eat, tew; and the water hyar is regularly pisen; hev you-all seen it? It's all colours. Doctor done come to see me; ain't helpin' me any; 'pears like he-all ain't goin' to come no mo'!"

"If you have a husband, why don't you go to him and let him care for you?"

She was silent, turning her wedding-ringless hand over and over on her lap: the flies came buzzing in around us, and in the near distance Excelsior buzzed, the loudest, most insistent creature on this part of the earth.

"Seems like a woman ought to help a man—some," she murmured. Downstairs Mrs. Jones sums her up in a few words.

"She-all suttinly ain't no '*Mrs.*' in the world! Calls herself '*White.*'" (The intonation is not to be mistaken.) "Pore thing's dyin'—knows it, tew! Come hyar to die, I reckon. She'll die right up thar in that baed, tew. Doctor don't come no mo'. Know she cayn't pay him nothin'. You-all come hyar to grandmaw, Letty!"

The child around whom the threads of existence are weaving fabric more intricate than any woof or

warp of the great mills goes confidingly to the old woman, who lifts her tenderly into her arms. With every word she speaks this aged creature draws her own picture. To these types no pen save Tolstoi's could do justice. Mine can do no more than display them by faithfully transcribing their simple dialect-speech.

"I am sixty-four years old, an' played out. Worked too hyard. Worked every day since I was a child, and when I wasn't workin' had the fevar. Come from the hills las' month. When his wife dyde, the son he come an' fetched me cross the river to help him."

How has she lived so long and so well, with life "so hyard on her"?

"I loved my husban', yes, ma'am, I regularly loved him; reckon no woman didn't ever love a man mo', and he loved me, tew, jest ez much. Seems tho' God couldn't bayr to see us-all so happy—couldn't las'; he dyde."

Mrs. Jones' figure is a case of bones covered with a brown substance—you could scarcely call it skin; a weather-beaten, tanned hide; nothing more. This human statue, ever responsive to the eternal moulding, year after year has been worked upon by the titan instrument, Labour: struggle, disease, want. But this hill woman has known love. It has transfigured her, illumined her. This poor deformed body is a torch only for an immortal flame. I know now why it seems good to be near her, why her

eyes are inspired. . . . I rise to leave her and she comes forward to me, puts out her hand first, then puts both thin, old arms about me and kisses me.

. . . . . .

In speaking of the settlement, it borders on the humourous to use the word sanitation. In the mill district, as far as my observation reached, there is none. Refuse not too vile for the public eye is thrown into the middle of the streets in front of the houses. The general drainage is performed by emptying pans and basins and receptacles into the backyards, so that as one stands at the back steps of one's own door one breathes and respires the filth of half a dozen shanties. Decaying vegetables, rags, dirt of all kinds are the flowers of these people, the decorations of their miserable garden patches. To walk through Granton (which the prospectus tells us is well drained) is to evoke nausea; to *inhabit* Granton is an ordeal which even necessity cannot rob of its severity.

These settlers, habitants of dwellings built by finance solely for the purpose of renting, are celebrated for their immorals—"a rough, lying, bad lot." "Oh, the mill-hands!" . . . Sufficient, expressive designation. Nevertheless, these people, simple, direct and innocent, display qualities that we have been taught are enviable—a lack of curiosity, for the most part, in the affairs of

others, a warm Southern courtesy, a human kindliness. I found these people degraded because of their habits and not of their tendencies, which statement I can justify; whatever may be their natural instincts, born, nurtured in their unlovely environment, they have no choice but to fall into the usages of poverty and degradation. They have seen nothing with which to compare their existences; they have no time, no means to be clean, and no stimulus to be decent.

A job at Granton was no more difficult to secure than was "spoolin'" at the other mill. I applied one Saturday noon, when Granton was silent and the operatives within their doors asleep, for the most part, leaving the village as deserted as it is on a workday. A like desolation pervades the atmosphere on holiday and day of toil. I was so lucky as to meet a shirt-sleeved overseer in the doorway. Preceding him were two ill-clad, pale children of nine and twelve, armed with a long, mop-like broom with which their task was to sweep the cotton from the floors—cotton that resettled eternally as soon as it was brushed away. The superintendent regarded me curiously, I thought penetratingly, and for the first time in my experience I feared detection. My dread was enhanced by the loneliness, the lawlessness of the place, the risk and boldness of my venture.

By this I was most thoroughly a mill-girl in

appearance, at least; my clothes were white with cotton, my hair far from tidy; fatigue and listlessness unassumed were in my attitude. I had not heard the Southern dialect for so long not to be able to fall into it with little effort. I told him I had been a "spooler" and did not like it—"wanted to spin." He listened silently, regarding me with interest and with what I trembled to fear was disbelief. I desperately pushed back my sunbonnet and in Southern drawl begged for work.

"Spinnin'?" he asked. "What do you want to spin for?"

He was a Yankee, his accent sharp and keen. How clean and decent and capable he appeared, the dark mill back of him; shantytown, vile, dirty, downtrodden, beside him!

I told him that I was tired of spooling and knew I could make more by something else.

He thrust his hands into his pockets. "To-night is Saturday; alone here?"

"Yes."

"Where you going to stay in Granton?"

"I don't know yet."

"Don't learn spinnin'," he said decidedly. "I am head of the *speedin'*-room. I'll give you a job in my room on Monday morning."

My relief was immense. His subsequent questions I parried, thanked him, and withdrew to keep secret from Excelsior that I had deserted for Granton.

Although these mills are within three hundred feet of each other, the villagers do not associate. The workings of Granton are unknown to Excelsior and vice versa.

The speeding-room in Granton is second only in noise to the weave-room. Conversation must be entrancing and vital to be pursued here! The speeder has under her care as many machines as her skill can control.

My teacher, Bessie, ran four sides, seventy-six speeders on a side, her work being regulated by a crank that marked the vibrations. To the lay mind the terms of the speeding-room can mean nothing. This girl made from $1.30 to $1.50 a day. She controlled in all 704 speeders; these she had to replenish and keep running, and to clean all the machinery gear with her own hands; to oil the steel, even to bend and clean under the lower shelf and come into contact with the most dangerous parts of the mechanism. The girl at the speeder next to me had just had her hand mashed to a jelly. The speeder watches her ropers run out; these stand at the top and back of the line. The ropers are refilled and their ends attached to the flying speeders by a quick motion. The yarn from the ropers is wound off on to the speeders. When the speeders are full of yarn they are detached from the nest of steel in which they whirl and are thrown into a hand-car which is pushed about the room by the girls themselves. Speeding

is excessively dirty work and greasy; the oiling and cleaning is only fit for a man to do.

The girl who teaches me has been at her work for ten years; she entered the factory at eight. She was tall, raw-boned, an expert, deft and capable, and, as far as I could judge in our acquaintance, thoroughly respectable.

There are long waits in this department of the cotton-spinning life. On tall green stools we sit at the end of our sides during the time it takes for one well-filled roper to spin itself out; we talk, or rather contrive to make ourselves heard. She has a sweet, gentle face; she is courtesy and kindness itself.

"What do you think about all day?"

"Why, I couldn't even begin to tell all my thoughts."

"Tell me some."

"Why, I think about books, I reckon. Do you-all like readin'?"

"Yes."

"Ain't nuthin' I like so good when I ain't tyrd."

"Are you often tired?" And this question surprises her. She looks up at me and smiles. "Why, I'm *always* tyrd! I read novels for the most part; like to read love stories and about fo'ran travel."

(For one short moment please consider: This hemmed-in life, this limited existence, encompassed on all sides by the warfare and battle and din of

maddening sounds, vibrations around her during twelve hours of the day, vibrations which mean that her food is being gained by each pulse of the engine and its ratio marked off by the disk at her side. Before her the scene is unchanged day after day, month after month, year after year. It is not an experience to this woman who works beside me so patiently; it is her life. The forms she sees are warped and scarred; the intellects with which she comes in contact are dulled and undeveloped. All they know is toil, all they know of gain is a fluctuation in a wage that ranges from cents to a dollar and cents again, never touching a two-dollar mark. The children who, barefooted, filthy, brush past her, sweeping the cotton from the infected floors, these are the only forms of childhood she has ever seen. The dirty women around her, low-browed, sensual, are the forms of womanhood that she knows; and the men? If she does not feed the passion of the overseer, she may find some mill-hand who will contract a "mill marriage" with this daughter of the loom, a marriage little binding to him and which will give her children to give in time to the mill. This is the realism of her love story: She reads books that you, too, may have read; she dares to dream of scenes, to picture them—scenes that you have sought and wearied of. A tithe of our satiety would mean her banquet, her salvation! . . . Her happiness? *That* question who can answer for her or for you?)

She continues: "I'm very fond of fo'ran travel, only I ain't never had much occasion for it."

This pathos and humour keep me silent. A few ropers have run out; she rises. I rise, too, to replace, to attach, and set the exhausted line taut and complete again.

Ten years! Ten years! All her girlhood and youth has been given to keeping ropers supplied with fresh yarn and speeders a-whirling. During this travail she has kept a serenity of expression, a depth of sweetness at which I marvel. Her voice is peculiarly soft and, coupled with the dialect drawl, is pleasant to hear.

"I hate the mills!" she says simply.

"What would you be if you could choose?" I venture to ask. She has no hesitation in answering.

"I'd love to be a trained nurse." Then, turn about is fair play in her mind, I suppose, for she asks:

"What would *you-all* be?"

And ashamed not to well repay her truthfulness I frankly respond: "I'd like to write a book."

"I *dee*-clare." She stares at me. "Why, you-all *is* ambitious. Did you ever write anything?"

"A letter or two."

She is interested and kindles, leaning forward. "I suttenly ain't so high in my ambitions," she says appreciatively. "Wish you'd write a love story for me to read," and she ponders over the idea, her eyes on my snowy flying speeders.

"Look a-hyar, got any of your scrappin's on writin' hyar? Ef you don't mind anybody's messin' with your things, bring your scrappin's to me an' I'll soon tell you ef you can write a book er not," she whispered to me encouragingly, confidentially, a whisper reaching farther in the mills than a loud sound.

I thanked her and said: "Do you think that you'd know?"

"Well, I guess I would!" she said confidently. "I ain't read all my life sense I was eight years old not to know good writin' from bad. Can you-all sing?"

"No."

"Play sweet music?"

"No."

"I jest love it." She enthuses. "Every Saturday afternoon I take of a music teacher on the gee-tar. It costs me a quarter."

I could see the scene: a shanty room, the tall, awkward figure bending over her instrument; the type that the teacher made, the ambition, the eagerness—all of which qualities we are so willing to deny to the slaves of toil.

"They ain't much flowers here in Granton," she said again. "'Tain't no use to try to have even a few geraneums; it's so dry; ain't no yards nor gardens, nuther."

Musing on this desolation as she walks up and

down the line, she says: "I dew love flowers, don't you?"

. . . . . .

Over and over again I am asked by those whose wish I suppose is to prove to themselves and their consciences that the working-girl is not so actively wretched, her outcry is not so audible that we are forced to respond:

"The working people are happy? The factory girls are happy, are they not? Don't you find them so?"

Is it a satisfaction to the leisure class, to the capitalist and employer, to feel that a woman poorly housed, ill-fed, in imminent moral danger, every temptation rampant over barriers down, overworked, overstrained by labour varying from ten to thirteen hours a day, by all-night labour, and destruction of body and soul, *is happy?*

Do you *wish* her to be so? Is the existence *ideal?*

I can speak only for the shoe manufacturing girl of Lynn and for the Southern mill-hand.

I thank Heaven that I can say truthfully, that of all who came under my observation, not one who was of age to reflect was happy. I repeat, the working-woman is brave and courageous, but the most sane and hopeful indication for the future of the factory girl and the mill-hand is that she rebels, dreams of something better, and will in the fullness of time stretch toward it. They

have no time to think, even if they knew how. All that remains for them in the few miserable hours of relief from labour and confinement and noise is to seek what pastime they may find under their hand. We have never realized, they have never known, that their great need—given the work that is wrung from them and the degradation in which they are forced to live—is a craving for amusement and relaxation. Amusements for this class are not provided; they *can* laugh, they rarely do. The thing that they seek—let me repeat: I cannot repeat it too often—in the minimum of time that remains to them, is distraction. They do not want to read; they do not want to study; they are too tired to concentrate. How can you expect it? I heard a manufacturer say: "We gave our mill-hands everything that we could to elevate them—a natatorium, a reading library—and these halls fell into disuse." I ask him now, through these pages, the questions which I did not put to him then as I listened in silence to his complaint. He said he thought too much was done for the mill-hands. What time would he suggest that they should spend in the reading-room, even if they have learned to read? They rise at four; at a quarter before six they are at work. The day in winter is not born when they start their tasks; the night has fallen long before they cease. In summer they are worked long into their evenings. They tell me that

they are too tired to eat; that all they want to do is to turn their aching bones on to their miserable mattresses and sleep until they are cried and shrieked awake by the mill summons. Therefore they solve their own questions. Nothing is provided for them that they can use, and they turn to the only thing that is within their reach—animal enjoyment, human intercourse and companionship. They are animals, as are their betters, and with it, let us believe, more excuse.

The mill marriage is a farce, and yet they choose to call their unions now and again a marriage. Many a woman has been a wife several times in the same town, in the same house. The bond-tying is a form, and, of course, mostly ignored. The settlements swarm with illegitimate children. Next to me work two young girls, both under seventeen, both ringless and with child.

. . . . . .

Let me picture the Foster household, where I used to call Saturday evenings.

Mrs. Foster herself, dirty, slipshod, a frowzy mass, hugs her fireside. Although the day is warm, she kindled a fire to stimulate the thin, poor blood exhausted by disease and fevers. Two flatirons lie in a dirty heap on the floor. As usual, the room is a nest of filth and untidiness.

Mrs. Foster is half paralyzed, but her tongue is free. She talks fluently in her soft Southern drawl,

more Negro than white as to speech and tone. Up to her sidles a dirty, pretty little boy of four.

"This yere is too little to go to the mill, but he's wild to go; yes, ser, he is so. Las' night he come to me en say, 'Auntie, you-all wake me up at fo' 'clock sure; I got ter go ter the mill.' "

Here the little blond child, whose mouth is set on a pewter spoon dripping over with hominy, grins appreciatively. He throws back his white and delicate little face, and his aunt, drawing him close to her, caresses him and continues: "Yes, ma'am, to-day he dun wake up after they-all had gone and he sayd, 'My goodness, I dun oversleep mase'f!' He sha'n't go to the mill," she frowned, " not ef we can help it. Why, I don't never let him outen my sight; 'fraid lest those awful mill children would git at him."

Thus she sheltered him with what care she knew—care that unfortunately *could not go far enough back to protect him!* His mother came in at the noon hour, as we sat there rocking and chatting. She was a straight, slender creature, not without grace in her shirt-waist and her low-pulled felt hat that shadowed her sullen face. She was very young, not more than twenty-two, and her history indicative and tragic. With a word only and a nod she passes us; she has now too many vital things and incidents in her own career to be curious regarding a strange mill-hand. She goes with her comrade—and cousin

—Mamie, into the kitchen to devour in as short a time as possible the noon dinner, served by the grandmother: cabbage and hominy. "They don't have time 'nough to eat," the aunt says; "no sooner then they-all come in and bolt their dinner then it is time to go back." Her child has followed her. Minnie was married at thirteen; in less than a year she was a grass widow. "My goodness, there's lots of grass widows!" my frowsled hostess nods. "Why, in one weave-room hyar there ain't a gyrl but what's left by her husband. One day a new gyrl come for to run a loom and they yells out at her, 'Is you-all a grass widow? Yer can't come in hyar ef you ain't.'"

But it was after her grass widowhood that Minnie's tragedy began. The mill was her ruin. So much grace and good looks could not go, cannot go, *does not* go unchallenged by the attentions of the men who are put there to run these women's work. The overseer was father of her child, and when she tried to force from him recognition and aid he threw over his position and left Columbia and this behind him. This, one instance under my own eyes observed. There are many.

"Mamie works all night" (she spoke of the other girl)—"makes more money. My, but she hates the mills! Says she ain't ever known a restful minute sence she left the hills."

My hostess has drawn the same conclusion from my Northern appearance that the Joneses drew.

"You-all must eat good where you come from! you look so healthy. Do you-all know the Banks girl over to Calcutta?"

"No."

"They give her nine months." (Calcutta is the roughest settlement round here.) "Why, that gyrl wars her hair cut short, and she shoots and cuts like a man. She drew her knife on a man last week—cut his face all up and into his side through his lung. Tried to pass as she was his wife, but when they had her up, ma'am, they proved she had been three men's wives and he four gyrl's husbands. He liked to died of the cut. They've given her nine months, but he ain't the only man that bears her marks. Over to Calcutta it's the knife and the gun at a wink. This yere was an awful pretty gyrl. My Min seed her peekin' out from behind the loom in the weave-room, thought she was a boy, and said: 'Who's that yere pretty boy peekin' at me?' And that gyrl told Min that she couldn't help knife the men, they all worried on her so! 'Won't never leave me alone; I jest have to draw on 'em; there ain't no other way.'" . . .

For the annals of morality and decency do not take up this faithful account and picture the cotton-mill village. You will not find it in these scenes drawn from the life as it is at this hour, as it is portrayed by the words that the very people themselves will pour into your ears. Under the walls of

Calcutta Negroes are engaged in laying prospective flower beds, so that the thirteen-hour workers may look out from time to time and see the forms of flowers. On the other side rise some twenty shanties. These houses of Calcutta village are very small, built from the roughest unpainted boards. Here it is, in this little settlement, that the knife comes flashing out at a word—that the women shoot as well as men, and perhaps more quickly.

"Richmond aint so bad as the other!" I can hear Mrs. Foster drawl out this recommendation to us. "They ain't so much chills here. We dun move up from town first; had to—too high rents for we-all; now we dun stay hyar. Why, some of the gyrls and boys works to Granton and bo'ds hyar; seems like it's mo' healthy."

Moving, ambulant population! tramping from hill to hill, from sand-heap to sand-heap to escape the slow or quick death, to prolong the toiling, bitter existence—pilgrims of eternal hope; born in the belief, in the sane and wholesome creed that, no matter what the horror is, no matter what the burden's weight must be, *one must live!* It takes a great deal to wake in these inexpressive, indifferent faces illumination of interest. At what should they rejoice?

I have made the destitution of beauty clear. I believe there is an absolute lack of every form or

sight that might inspire or cause a soul to awake. There is nothing to lift these people from the earth and from labour. There should be a complete readjustment of this system. I have been interested in reading in the New York *Sun* of April 20th of the visit of the bishops to the model factories in Ohio. I am constrained to wish that bishops and clergy and philanthropists and millionaires and capitalists might visit in bodies and separately the mills of South Carolina and their tenement population. It is difficult to know just what the ideas are of the people who have constructed these dwellings. They tell us in this same prospectus, which I have read with interest after my personal experience, that these villages are "*picturesque*." This is the only reference I find to the people and their conditions. I have seen nothing but horror, and yet I went into these places without prejudice, prepared to be interested in the industry of the Southern country, and with no idea of the tragedy and nudity of these people's existence. The ultimate balance is sure to come; meanwhile, we cannot but be sensible of the vast individual sacrifices that must fall to destruction before the scales swing even.

THE CHILD IN SOUTHERN MILLS

CHAPTER IX

The Child in the Southern Mills

In the week before I left for the South I dined in —— with a very charming woman and her husband. Before a table exquisite in its appointments, laden with the best the market could offer and good taste display, sat the mistress, a graceful, intelligent young woman, full of philanthropic, charitable interests, and one whom I know to be devoted to the care and benefiting of little children in her city. During the meal I said to her casually:

"Do you know that in your mills in South Carolina to-night, as we sit here, little children are working at the looms and frames—little children, some of them not more than six years old?"

She said, in astonishment, "I don't know it; and I can't believe it."

I told her I should soon see just how true the reports were, and when I returned to New York I would tell her the facts. She is not alone in her ignorance. Not one person, man or woman, to whom I told the facts of the cases I observed "*dreamed that children worked in any mills in the*

United States!" After my experience amongst the working class, I am safe in saying that I consider their grievances to be the outcome of the ignorance and greed of the manufacturer abetted, aided and made possible by the ignorance and poverty of the labourer.

There is nothing more conscience-silencing than to accuse the writers of the different articles on child-labour of sentimentality. The comfort in which we live makes it easy to eliminate thoughts that torture us to action in the cause of others. I will be delighted to meet an accusation of sentimentality and exaggeration by any man or woman who has gone to a Southern mill as an operative and worked side by side with the children, lived with them in their homes. It is defamation to use the word "home" in connection with the unwholesome shanty in the pest-ridden district where the remnant of the children's lives not lived in the mill is passed. This handful of unpainted huts, raised on stilts from the soil, fever-ridden and malarious; this blank, ugly line of sun-blistered shanties, along a road, yellow-sand deep, is a mill village. The word *village* has a cheerful sound. It summons a country scene, with the charms of home, however simple and unpretentious. There is nothing to charm or please in the villages I have already, in these pages, drawn for you to see and which with veritable sick reluctance I summon again before your eyes.

Every house is like unto its neighbour—a shelter put up rapidly and filled to the best advantage.

There is not a garden within miles, not a flower, scarcely a tree. Arid, desolate, beautyless, the pale sand of the State of South Carolina nurtures as best it can a stray tree or shrub—no more. At the foot of the shanties' black line rises the cotton mill. New, enormous, sanitary (!!). Its capital runs into millions; its prospectuses are pompous; its pay-roll mysterious. You will not be able to say how many of the fifteen hundred odd hands at work in this mill are adults, how many children. In the State of South Carolina there are statistics of neither births, marriages nor deaths. What can you expect of a mill village!

At 5:45 we have breakfasted—the twelve of us who live in one small shanty, where we have slept, all five of us in one room, men to the right of the kitchen, women and children on the left. To leave the pestilence of foul air, the stench of that dwelling, is blessed, even if the stroke that summons is the mill whistle.

As we troop to work in the dawn, we leave behind us the desert-like town; all day it drowses, haunted by a few figures of old age and infirmity—but the mill is alive! We have given up, in order to satisfy its appetite, all manner of flesh and blood, and the gentlest morsel between its merciless jaws is the little child.

So long as I am part of its food and triumph I will study the mill.

Leaving the line of flashing, whirling spools, I lean against the green box full of cotton refuse and regard the giant room.

It is a wonderful sight. The mill itself, a model of careful, well-considered building, has every facility for the best and most advantageous manufacture of textiles. The fine frames of the intricate "warping," the well-placed frames of the "drawing-in" all along the window sides of the rooms; then lines upon lines of spool frames. Great piles of stuff lie here and there in the room. It is early—"all the yarn ain't come yet." Two children whose work has not been apportioned lie asleep against a cotton bale. The terrible noise, the grinding, whirling, pounding, the gigantic burr renders other senses keen. By my side works a little girl of eight. Her brutal face, already bespeaking knowledge of things childhood should ignore, is surrounded by a forest of yellow hair. She goes doggedly at her spools, grasping them sullenly. She walks well on her bare, filthy feet. Her hands and arms are no longer flesh colour, but resemble weather-roughened hide, ingrained with dirt. Around the tangle of her hair cotton threads and bits of lint make a sort of aureole. (Her nimbus of labour, if you will!) There is nothing saint-like in that face, nor in the loose-lipped mouth, whence exudes a black

stain of snuff as between her lips she turns the root she chews.

"She's a mean girl," my little companion says; "we-all don't hev nothin' to say to her."

"Why?"

"Her maw hunts her to the mill; she don't want to go—no, sir—so she's mad most the time."

Thus she sets her dogged resistance in scowling black looks, in quick, frantic gestures and motions against the machinery that claims her impotent childhood. The nimbus around her furze of hair remains; there are other heads than saints—there are martyrs! Let the child wear her crown.

Through the looms I catch sight of Upton's, my landlord's, little child. She is seven; so small that they have a box for her to stand upon. She is a pretty, frail, little thing, a spooler—"a good spooler, tew!" Through the frames on the other side I can only see her fingers as they clutch at the flying spools; her head is not high enough, even with the box, to be visible. Her hands are fairy hands, fine-boned, well-made, only they are so thin and dirty, and her nails—claws; she would do well to have them cut. A nail can be torn from the finger, *is* torn from the finger frequently,* by this flying

* In Huntsville, Alabama, a child of eight lost her index and middle fingers of the right hand in January, 1902. One doctor told me that he had amputated the fingers of more than a hundred babies. A merchant told me he had *frequently* seen children whose hands had been cut off by the machinery.—*American Federationist.*

spool. I go over to Upton's little girl. Her spindles are not thinner nor her spools whiter.

"How old are you?"

"Ten."

She looks six. It is impossible to know if what she says is true. The children are commanded both by parents and bosses to advance their ages when asked.

"Tired?"

She nods, without stopping. She is a "remarkable fine hand." She makes forty cents a day. See the value of this labour to the manufacturer—cheap, yet skilled; to the parent it represents $2.40 per week.

I must not think that as I work beside them I will gain their confidence! They have no time to talk. Indeed, conversation is not well looked upon by the bosses, and I soon see that unless I want to entail a sharp reproof for myself and them I must stick to my "side." And at noon I have no heart to take their leisure. At twelve o'clock, Minnie, a little spooler, scarcely higher than her spools, lifts her hands above her head and exclaims: "*Thank God, there's the whistle!*" I watched them disperse: some run like mad, always bareheaded, to fetch the dinner-pail for mother or father who work in the mill and who choose to spend these little legs and spare their own. It takes ten minutes to go, ten to return, and the little labourer has ten to

devote to its own food, which, half the time, he is too exhausted to eat.

I watch the children crouch on the floor by the frames; some fall asleep between the mouthfuls of food, and so lie asleep with food in their mouths until the overseer rouses them to their tasks again. Here and there totters a little child just learning to walk; it runs and crawls the length of the mill. Mothers who have no one with whom to leave their babies bring them to the workshop, and their lives begin, continue and end in the horrible pandemonium.

One little boy passes by with his broom; he is whistling. I look up at the cheery sound that pierces fresh but faint and natural above the machines' noise. His eyes are bright; his good spirits surprise me: here is an argument for my comfortable friends who wish to prove that the children "are happy!" I stop him.

"You seem very jolly!"

He grins.

"How long have you been working?"

"Two or three days."

The gay creature has just *begun* his servitude and brings into the dreary monotony a flash of the spirit which should fill childhood.

I think it will be granted that it takes a great deal to discourage and dishearten a child. The hopefulness of the mill communities lies in just those elements that overwork in the adult and that child

labour will ultimately destroy. When hope is gone in the adult he must wreak some vengeance on the bitter fate that has robbed him. There is no more tragic thing than the hopeless child. The adult who grows hopeless can affiliate with the malcontents and find in the insanity of anarchy what he calls revenge.

It seems folly to insult the common sense of the public by asking them whether they think that thirteen hours a day, with a half to three-quarters of an hour for recreation at noon, or the same amount of night-work in a mill whose atmosphere is vile with odours, humid with unhealthfulness, filled with the particles of flying cotton, a pandemonium of noise and deafening roar, so deafening that the loss of hearing is frequent and the keenness of hearing always dulled . . . whether the atmosphere combined with the association of men and women whose morals or lack of morals is notorious all over the world, is good for a growing child? Is it conducive to progressive development, to the making of decent manhood or womanhood? What kind of citizen can this child—if he is fit enough in the economic struggle of the world to survive—turn out to be? Not citizens at all: creatures scarcely fit to be called human beings.

I asked the little girl who teaches me to spool who the man is whom I have seen riding around on horseback through the town.

"Why, he goes roun' rousin' up the hands who ain't in their places. Sometimes he takes the children outen thayre bades an' brings 'em back to the mill."

And if the child can stand, it spins and spools until it drops, till constitution rebels, and death, the only friend it has ever known, sets it free.

Besides being spinners and spoolers, and occasionally weavers even, the children sweep the cotton-strewed floors. Scarcely has the miserable little object, ragged and odourous, passed me with his long broom, which he drags half-heartedly along, than the space he has swept up is cotton-strewn again. It settles with discouraging rapidity; it has also settled on the child's hair and clothes, and his eyelashes, and this atmosphere he breathes and fairly eats, until his lungs become diseased. Pneumonia—fatal in nearly all cases here—and lung fever had been a pestilence, "a regular plague," before I came. There were four cases in the village where I lived, and fever and ague, malaria and grippe did their parts.

"Why, thar ain't never a haouse but's got somebody sick," my little teacher informed me in her soft Southern dialect. "I suttinly never did see a place like this for dyin' in winter time. I reckon et's funerals every day."

Here is a little child, not more than seven years old. The land is a hot enough country, we will

concede, but not a savage South Sea Island! She has on one garment, if a tattered sacking dress can so be termed. Her bones are nearly through her skin, but her stomach is an unhealthy pouch, abnormal. *She has dropsy.* She works in *a new mill*—in one of the largest mills in South Carolina. Here is a slender little boy—a birch rod (good old simile) is not more slender, but the birch has the advantage: it is elastic—it bends, has youth in it. This boy looks ninety. He is a dwarf; twelve years old, he appears seven, no more. He sweeps the cotton off the floor of "the baby mill." (How tenderly and proudly the owners speak of their brick and mortar.) He sweeps the cotton and lint from the mill aisles from 6 P. M. to 6 A. M. without a break in the night's routine. He stops of his own accord, however, to cough and expectorate—he has advanced tuberculosis.

At night the shanties receive us. On a pine board is spread our food—can you call it nourishment? The hominy and molasses is the best part; salt pork and ham are the strong victuals.

It is eight o'clock when the children reach their homes—later if the mill work is behindhand and they are kept over hours. They are usually beyond speech. They fall asleep at the table, on the stairs; they are carried to bed and there laid down as they are, unwashed, undressed; and the inanimate bundles of rags so lie until the mill summons them

with its imperious cry before sunrise, while they are still in stupid sleep.

"What do you do on Sundays?" I asked one little girl.

"Why, thare ain't nothing much to dew. I go to the park sometimes."

This park is at the end of a trolley line; it is their Arcadia. Picture it! A few yellow sand hills with clusters of pine trees and some scrubby undergrowth; a more desolate, arid, gloomy pleasure ground cannot be conceived. On Sundays the trolleys bring those who are not too tired to so spend the day. On Sundays the mill shanties are full of sleepers.

The park has a limited number of devotees. Through the beautyless paths and walks the figures pass like shadows. There come three mill girls arm in arm; their curl papers, screwed tight all the week, are out on Sunday, in greasy, abundant curls. Sunday clothes are displayed in all their superbness. Three or four young men, town fellows, follow them; they are all strangers, but they will go home arm in arm.

Several little children, who have no clothes but those they wear, cling close to the side of a gaunt, pale-faced man, who carries in his arms the youngest. The little girl has become a weight to be carried on Sundays; she has worked six days of the week—shall she not rest on the seventh? She shall; she

claims this, and lies inert on the man's arm, her face already seared with the scars of toil.

I ran such risk taking pictures that I relinquished the task, and it was only the last day at the mill, while still in my working clothes with a camera concealed in my pocket, that I contrived to get a picture or two. I ventured to ask two little boys who swept the mill to stand for their pictures.

"I don't kyar to," the older one said. I explained that it would not hurt them, as I thought he was afraid; but his little companion vouchsafed: "We-all ain't got no nickel." When they understood it was a free picture they were as delighted as possible and posed with alacrity, making touching apologies for their greasy, dirty condition.

When I asked one of them if he was ever clean, he said: "On Sunday I wash my hands."

It was noon, on the day I chose to leave ——, turning my back on the mill that had allured me to its doors and labour. In South Carolina early April is torrid, flies and mosquitoes are rampant. What must this settlement be in midsummer heat? There is no colour in the Southern scene; the clothes of the mill-hands, the houses, the soil are of one tone—and, more strange, there is not one line of red, one dash of life, in the faces of the hundreds of women and children that pass me on their way back to work.

Under the existing circumstances they have no

outlook, these people, no hope; their appearance expresses accurately the changeless routine of an existence devoted to eternal ignorance, eternal toil.

From their short half-hour of mid-noon rest, the whistle, piercing, inanimate call, has dared to command the slavish obedience of animate and intelligent beings. I pause by the trestle over which rumble the cars, heavily laden with the cotton cloth whose perfection has made this Southern mill justly famous.

The file of humanity that passes me I shall never forget! The Blank Mill claims 1,500 of these labourers; at least 200 are children. The little things run and keep step with the older men and women; their shaggy, frowzled heads are bent, their hands protrude pitifully from their sleeves; they are barefooted, bareheaded. With these little figures the elements wanton; they can never know the fullness of summer or the proper maturity of autumn. Suns have burned them, rains have fallen upon them, as unprotected through storms they go to their work. The winter winds have penetrated the tatters with blades like knives; gray and dusty and earth-coloured the line passes. These are children? No, they are wraiths of childhood—they are effigies of youth! What can Hope work in this down-trodden soil for any future harvest? They can curse and swear; they chew tobacco and take snuff. When they speak at all their voices

are feeble; ears long dulled by the thunder of the mill are no longer keen to sound; their speech is low and scarcely audible. Over sallow cheeks where the skin is tightly drawn their eyes regard you suspiciously, malignantly even, never with the frank look of childhood. As the long afternoon goes by in its hours of leisure for us fatigue settles like a blight over their features, their expressions darken to elfish strangeness, whilst sullen lines, never to be eradicated, mark the distinctive visages of these children of labour.

At certain seasons of the year they actually die off like flies. They fall subject, not to children's diseases exactly—nothing really natural seems to come into the course of these little existences—they fall a prey to the maladies that are the outcomes of their conditions. They are always half-clad in the winter time; their clothes differ nothing at all from their summer clothes; they have no overcoats or coats; many of them go barefoot all winter long. They come out from the hot mills into cold, raw winds and fall an easy prey to pneumonia, scourge of the mill-town. Their general health is bad all the year round; their skins and complexions have taken the tone of the sandy soil of the Southern country in which they are bred and in which their martyrdom is accomplished. I never saw a rosy cheek nor a clear skin: these are the parchment editions of childhood on which

Tragedy is written indelibly. You can there read the eternal condemnation of those who have employed them for the sake of gain.

It is a melancholy satisfaction to believe that mill labour will kill off little spinners and spoolers. Unfortunately, this is not entirely true. There are constitutions that survive all the horrors of existence. I have worked both in Massachusetts and the South beside women who entered the mill service at eight years of age. One of these was still in her girlhood when I knew her. She was very strong, very good and still had some illusions left. I do not know what it goes to prove, when I say that at twenty, in spite of twelve years of labour, she still dreamed, still hoped, still longed and prayed *for something that was not a mill.* If this means content in servitude, if this means that the poor white trash are born slaves, or if, on the contrary, it means that there is something inherent in a woman that will carry her past suicide and past idiocy and degradation, all of which is around her, I think it argues well for the working women.

The other woman was forty. She had no illusions left—please remember she had worked since eight; she had reached, if you like, the idiot stage. She had nothing to offer during all the time I knew her but a few sentences directly in connection with her toil.

It is useless to advance the plea that spooling is

not difficult. No child (we will cancel under twelve!) should work at all. No human creature should work thirteen hours a day. No baby of six, seven or eight should be seen in the mills.

It is also useless to say that these children tell you that they "like the mill." They are beaten by their parents if they do not tell you this, and, granted that they do not like their servitude, when was it thought expedient that a child should direct its existence? If they do not pass the early years of their lives in study, when should they learn? At what period of their lives should the children of the Southern mill-hand be educated? Long before they reach their teens their habits are formed—ignorance is ingrained; indeed, after a few years they are so vitally reduced that if you will you cannot teach them. Are these little American children, then, to have no books but labour? No recreation? To be crushed out of life to satisfy the ignorance and greed of their parents, the greed of the manufacturers? Whatever else we are, we are financiers *per se*. The fact that to-day, as for years past, Southern cotton mills are employing the labour of children under tender age—employing an army of them to the number of twenty thousand under twelve—can only be explained by a frank admittal that infantile labour has been considered advantageous to the cause of gain.

This gain, apparent by the facts that a mill can be

run for thousands of dollars less in the South than a like mill can be run in the North, and its net surplus profits be the same as those of the Northern manufactory, is one by which one generation alone will profit. The attractiveness of the figures is fallacious. What I imply is self-evident. The infant population (its numbers give it a right to this dignity of term) whose cheap toil feeds the mills is doomed. I mean to say that the rank and file of humanity are daily weeded out; that thousands of possibly strong, healthy, mature labouring men and women are being disease-stricken, hounded out of life; the cotton mill child cannot develop to the strong normal adult working-man and woman. The fiber exhausted in the young body cannot be recreated. Early death carries hundreds out of life, disease rots the remainder, and the dulled maturity attained by a creature whose life has been passed in this labour is not fit to propagate the species.

The excessively low wages paid these little mill-hands keep under, of necessity, the wage paid the grown labourer. It is a crying pity that children are equal to the task imposed upon them. It is a crying pity that machines (since they have appeared, with their extended, all-absorbing power) should not do all! Particularly in the Southern States do they evince, at a fatal point, their limit, display their inadequacy. When babies can be employed successfully for thirteen hours out of the twenty-

four at all machines with men and women; when infants feeds mechanism with labour that has not one elevating, humanizing effect upon them physically or mentally, it places human intelligence below par and cheapens and distorts the nobler forms of toil. Not only is it "no disgrace to work," but on the contrary it is a splendid thing to be able to labour, and those who gain their bread by the sweat of their brow are not the servants of mankind in the sense of the term, but the patriarchs and controllers of the world's march and the most subtle signs of the times. But there are distinctly fitnesses of labour, and the proper presentation to the workingman and woman and child is a consideration.

No one to-day would be likely for an instant to concede that to replace the treadmill horse with a child (a thing often seen and practised in times past) would be an advantage. And yet the march of the child up and down before its spooling frame is more suggestive of an animal—of the dog hitched to the Belgian milk cart; of the horse on the mill-tread—than another analogy.

Contrast this pallid automaton with the children of the poor in a New York kindergarten, where the six- or seven-year-old child of the German, the Hungarian, the Polish emigrant, may have its imagination stimulated, its creative and individual faculties employed as it is taught to *make things*—construct, combine, weave, sew, mould. Every

power latent is cajoled to expression, every talent encouraged. Thus work in its first form is rendered attractive, and youth and individuality are encouraged. In the South of this American country whose signet is individualism, whose strength (despite our motto, "United we stand") is in the individual freedom and vast play of original thought, here in the South our purest born, the most unmixed blood of us, is being converted into machines of labour when the forms of little children are bound in youth to the spindle and loom.

In a certain mill in Alabama there are seventy-five child-labourers who work twelve hours out of the twenty-four; they have a half-hour at noon for luncheon. There is a night school in connection with this mill corporation. Fancy it, a night school for the day-long child labourer! Fifty out of seventy-five troop to it. Although they are so tired they cannot keep awake on the benches, and the littlest of them falls asleep over its letters, although they weep with fatigue, they are eager to learn! Is there a more conclusive testimony to the quality of the material that is being lost to the States and the country by the martyrdom of intelligent children?

One hears two points of view expressed on this subject. The capitalist advances that the greed of the parents forces the children into the mills; the people themselves tell you that unless they are

willing to let their available children work, their own lives are made impossible by the overseers. A widow who has children stands a fair chance of having her rent free; if she refuses this tithe of flesh and blood she is too often thrust into the street. So I am told. Now, which of these facts is the truth? It seems to be clearly too much left to the decision of private enterprise or parental incapability. The Legislature is the only school in which to decide the question. During my stay in South Carolina I never heard one woman advocate the mills for children. One mother, holding to her breast her illegitimate child, her face dark with dislike, said: "*Them mills!* I would not let *my* little boy work in 'em! No, sir! He would go over my dead body." Another woman said: "*My* little girl work? No, ma'am; she goes to school!" and the child came in even as she spoke—let me say the only cheerful specimen of childhood, with the exception of the few little creatures in the kindergarten, that I saw in the mill district.

South Carolina has become very haughty on this topic and has reached a point when she tells us she is to cure the sore in her own body without aid or interference. At a late session of the Legislature the bill for the restriction of child labour—we must call it this, since it legislates only for the child under ten—this bill was defeated by only two dissenting voices. A humane gentleman who laid

claim to one of these voices was heard to ejaculate as the bill failed to pass: "Thank God!" Just why, it is not easy to understand.

When I was so arrogant as to say to the editor of *The State*, the leading paper in South Carolina, that I hoped my article might aid the cause, I made an error clearly, for he replied:

"We need no aid. The people of South Carolina are aroused to the horror and will cure it themselves."

Georgia is not roused to the horror; Alabama is stirring actively; but the Northerners who own these mills—the capitalists, the manufacturers, the men who are building up a reputation for the wealth of South Carolina and Alabama mills, are the least aroused of all. We must believe that many directors of these mills are ignorant of the state of affairs, and that those who are enlightened willingly blind their eyes.

The mill prospectuses are humourous when read by the investigator. We are told "labour-unions cut no figure here!"

Go at night through the mills with the head of the Labour Federation and with the instigator of the first strikes in this district—with men who are the brain and fiber of the labour organization, and see the friendly looks flash forth, see the understanding with which they are greeted all through certain mills. Consider that not 200 miles away at the

moment are 22,000 labourers on strike. Then greet these statements with a smile!

On my return to the North I made an especial effort to see my New England friend. We lunched together this time, and at the end of the meal her three little children fluttered in to say a friendly word. I looked at them, jealous for their little defrauded fellows, whose twelve-hour daily labour served to purchase these exquisite clothes and to heap with dainties the table before us. But I was nevertheless rejoiced to see once again the forms of real childhood for whom air and freedom and wealth were doing blessed tasks. When we were alone I drew for my friend as well as I could pictures of what I had seen. She leaned forward, took a brandied cherry from the dish in front of her, ate it delicately and dipped her fingers in the finger-bowl; then she said:

"Dear friend, I am going to surprise you very much."

I waited, and felt that it would be difficult to surprise me with a tale of a Southern mill.

"Those little children—*love the mill!* They *like* to work. It's a great deal better for them to be employed than for them to run the streets!"

She smiled over her argument, and I waited.

"Do you know," she continued, "that I believe they are really very happy."

She had well presented her argument. She had said she would surprise me—and she did.

"You will not feel it a breach of affection and hospitality if I print what you say?" I asked her. "It's only fair that the capitalist's view should be given here and there first hand. You own one-half the mill in ——, Carolina?"

"Yes."

"What do you think of a model mill with only nine hours a day labour, holidays and all nights free, schools, where education is enforced by the State; reading-rooms open as well as churches—amusement halls, music, recreation and pleasure, as well as education and religion?"

"I think," she said keenly, "that united, concentrated action on the part of the cotton mill owners might make such a thing feasible; for us to try it alone would mean ruin."

"Not ruin," I amended; "a reduction of income."

"Ruin," she said, firing. "We couldn't compete. To compete," she said with the conviction of an intelligent, well-informed manufacturer, "I must have my sixty-six hours a week!"

The spirit of discontent is always abroad when false conditions exist. Its restless presence is controlled by one spirit alone—humanity—when reasonably are weighed and justly decided the questions of balance between Capital and Labour.

We must believe that there is no unsolvable

problem before us in considering the presence of the child in the Southern mills.

There is nothing in the essence of the subject to discourage the social economist. The question should not be left to the decision of the private citizen. This stuff is worth saving. There is the making in these children of first-class citizens. I quote from the illustrated supplement of the South Carolina *State* that you may see what the mill manufacturers think of the quality of the "poor white trash":

> "The operatives in the South Carolina mills are the common people—the bone and sinew who have left the fields to the Negroes. They are industrious, intelligent, frugal, and have the native instincts of honesty and integrity and of fidelity which are essential to good citizenship."

If such things are true of the mill-hands of South Carolina, it is worth while to save their children.

Henceforth, to my vision across the face of the modern history of labour and manufacture will eternally defile the gray, colourless column of the Southern mill-hands: an earth-hued line of humanity—a stream that divides not.

Here there are no stragglers. At noon and night the pace is quick, eager. Steady as a prison gang, it goes to food, rest and freedom. But this alacrity is absent in the morning. On the hem of night, the fringe of day, the march is slow and lifeless. Many

of the heads are bent and downcast; some of the faces peer forward, and sallow masks of human countenances lift, with a look set beyond the mill—toward who can say what vain horizon! The Stream wanders slowly toward the Houses of Labour, although whipped by invisible scourge of Need. Without this incentive and spur, think you it would pursue a direction toward *thirteen hours of toil*, shut from air and sunlight and day, taking in its rank the women, the young girl and the little child?

The tone of the garments is somber and gray, blending with the gray of the dawn; or red, blending with the earth stains of the peculiar Southern soil; or claylike and pale yellow. Many of the faces are pallid, some are tense, most of them are indifferent, dulled by toil and yet not all unintelligent. Those who are familiar with the healthy type of the decent workmen of the West and East must draw their distinctions as they consider this peculiar, unfamiliar class. The Southern mill-hand's face is unique—a fearful type, whose perusal is not pleasant or cheerful to the character-reader, to the lover of humanity or to the prophet of the future. Thus they defile: men with felt hats drawn over their brows; women, sunbonneted or hatless; children barefoot, bareheaded, ragged, unwashed. Unwashed these labourers have gone to bed; unwashed they have arisen. To their garments cling the bits of cotton, the threads of cotton, the strands of roping, badges

of their trade, brand of their especial toil. As they pass over the red clay, over the pale yellow sand, the earth seems to claim them as part of her unchanging phase; cursed by the mandate primeval—"by the sweat of thy brow"—Earth-Born!

In the early morning the giant mill swallows its victims, engorges itself with entering humanity; then it grows active, stirring its ponderous might to life, movement and sound. Hear it roar, shudder, shattering the stillness for half a mile! It is full now of flesh and blood, of human life and brain and fiber: it is content! Triumphantly during the long, long hours it devours the tithe of body and soul.

Behind lies the deserted, accursed village, destitute of life during the hours of day, condemned to the care of a few women, the old, the bedridden and the sick—of which last there are plenty.

Mighty Mills—pride of the architect and the commercial magnate; charnel houses, devastators, destructors of homes and all that mankind calls hallowed; breeders of strife, of strike, of immorality, of sedition and riot—buildings tremendous—you give your immutable faces, myriads-windowed, to the dust-heaps, to the wind-swept plains of sand. When South Carolina shall have taken from you (as its honour and wisdom and citizenship is bound to do) the youngest of the children, do you think that you shall inevitably continue to devour what remains?

There is too much resistance yet left in the mass of human beings. Youth will then rebel at a servitude beginning *at ten years of age:* and the women will lift their arms above their heads one day in desperate gesture of appeal and cry out—not for the millionaire's surplus; not a tirade anarchistic against capital. . . . What is this woman of the hills and woman of the mills that she should so demand? She will call for hours short enough to permit her to bear her children; for requital commensurate with the exigence of progressive civilization; for wages equal to her faithful toil.

This is not too fantastic a demand or too ideal a state to be divinely hoped for, believed in and brought to pass.*

. . . . . .

Not inapt here is the pagan idea of *Nous*, moving upon chaos, stirring the stagnant, unresponsive forces into motion; agitating these forces into action; the individual elements separate and go forth, each one on its definitely inspired mission. Some inevitable hour shall see the universal agitation of the vast body known as the "labouring class." For the welfare of the whole world, may it not come whilst they are so ignorant and so down-pressed.

* Of the 21,000,000 spindles in the United States, the South has 6,000,000. $35,381,000 of Carolina's wealth is in cotton mills.

NOTE. I have seen, in Aragon, Georgia, hope for the future of the mill-hands. The Aragon Cotton Mills are an improve-

ment on the South Carolina Mills and are under the direct supervision of an owner whose sole God is not gain. Mr. Walcott is an agitator of the nine-hours-a-day movement; he is opposed to Child Labour, and in all his relations with his hands he is humane and kindly. I look to the time when Aragon shall set a perfect pattern of what a mill-town should be. It is already quite the best I have seen. Its healthfulness is far above the average, and its situation most fortunate.